

# **ASI Candidates Survey: The Arts in Our Community**

The year Arts Services Initiative of Western New York surveyed candidates for various offices in Erie and Niagara Counties to ascertain their priorities and their positions on the role of arts and cultural institutions in the communities they hope to serve.

“As the cultural sector shows its strength as a constituency, it’s important to know where our elected officials and candidates stand on arts and culture,” says Tod Kniazuk, ASI’s executive director.

## **City of Buffalo Mayor:**

### **BYRON BROWN**



**Office Sought: Mayor of Buffalo**

**Current Occupation: Mayor of Buffalo**

#### **Top three priorities if elected:**

1. Continue the progress we have made in increasing economic development activity, creating jobs for Buffalo residents.
2. Continue the progress we have made in reducing crime in the City of Buffalo.
3. Continue the progress we have made in improving our neighborhoods by investing in infrastructure, parks, and cultural institutions.

#### **What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Buffalo?**

Arts and culture are integral to the Buffalo community, serving as a major fabric of our identity and culture, and helping to be a catalyst for tourism and economic development. That is why when Erie County cut funding for the arts, I stepped up as mayor have provided \$300,000 to the arts in my budgets since those cuts. I was also proud to re-establish the Arts Commission and hire an executive director for the Arts Commission.

#### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Buffalo?**

Arts and culture are pivotal to the city’s “place-based” planning strategy of focusing planning and economic development activity in and around community assets, including arts and cultural institutions.

#### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Buffalo?**

By continuing to promote Buffalo’s many assets and by continuing to invest in and support our cultural institutions and attractions.

**What do you see as your role in improving education in Buffalo, and how does a quality arts education factor into your vision?**

My role is to lead the city and work with all partners in government, the Buffalo Board of Education, and community stakeholders to improve the quality of our education system. Arts education is critical for students and for the health of our school system which is why I worked with the Common Council to find city funds to restore \$400,000 in music funding for the benefit of students in the Buffalo Public Schools.

**If elected, will you decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations and establish a merit-based, peer review process for cultural funding allocations such as the Buffalo Arts Funding Advisory Committee?**

I will continue to provide funding for cultural organizations, and will explore ways to provide additional funding for cultural funding allocations based on merit.

**Will you enforce the One Percent for Public Art ordinance already on the books that requires all projects receiving city funding to allocate one percent of the total project to public art?**

I support the promotion and inclusion of public art in the City of Buffalo and was proud to allocate significant funding for public art and monument restoration in the City of Buffalo.

**SERGIO RODRIGUEZ**



**Office Sought: Mayor of Buffalo**

**Current Occupation: Candidate, Mayor of Buffalo**

**Top three priorities if elected:**

Education. Crime. Unemployment. The arts must be actively engaged in programming which reduces crime, contributes to a quality and well-rounded education, and provides stable and fair employment.

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Buffalo?**

The role of arts and culture in general is to increase quality of life and to provide individuals with a rich inner experience. In Buffalo, we have an unusually high number of innovative and cutting-edge cultural organizations, as well as those that focus on traditional arts. Buffalo is understood to be an important destination to arts and culture both nationally and internationally. It is ranked as the premier destination of arts and culture for mid-sized cities in the United States.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Buffalo?**

The investment into the arts brings back a huge return into Buffalo's economy. The significance of Buffalo's arts and culture community is an extremely important factor when businesses and corporations consider relocation. I will ensure that there is a dedicated source of funding for the arts which is removed from the political process. A panel of experts from the field must be created that will award funding in a manner which reflects quality performance.

## **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Buffalo?**

Buffalo has an unprecedented history with the Underground Railroad that needs to be further developed to access national and international interest in this area. We need to tap into that million people that go to Niagara Falls, Ontario and New York and direct them to a very organized and structured tourist industry in Buffalo. We have all the cultural and architectural assets here and limited organizational structure to showcase them.

## **What do you see as your role in improving education in Buffalo, and how does a quality arts education factor into your vision?**

Buffalo has lost a lot of its arts programs. We have a plethora of arts organizations and programming that have the ability to augment existing arts programs within the Buffalo Public Schools system. I want to encourage all arts organizations to create educational programming to be integrated within Buffalo Public Schools system. This concept could be called Portable Buffalo Arts. Funding and supportive services will be available to provide this programming.

## **If elected, will you decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations and establish a merit-based, peer review process for cultural funding allocations such as the Buffalo Arts Funding Advisory Committee?**

Yes, I would like to create a dedicated source of funding that is removed from the political process, as previously stated. Part of my plan for arts and culture for the city in terms of dedicated funding is to increase current budgetary allocations.

## **Will you enforce the One Percent for Public Art ordinance already on the books that requires all projects receiving city funding to allocate one percent of the total project to public art?**

Yes, I have done research on this in the very beginning of my campaign and acquired the original legislative debate and action that resulted in this one percent funding for the arts but is not currently being enforced.

## **BERNIE TOLBERT**



**Office Sought: Mayor of Buffalo**

**Current Occupation: Retired, Special Agent in Charge, FBI; Vice President in charge of Security, NBA**

### **Top three priorities if elected:**

1. Education: Create programs to connect education and youth development, not just focusing on literacy but all academic subjects and the arts.
2. Crime: Investing in the future through city resourced youth development programs is a major cornerstone of preventative policing that is essential to mitigate factors that create the school to prison pipeline and make streets safer for all.
3. Jobs/Economic Development: Create job opportunities in all facets of the economy including the arts.

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Buffalo?**

The importance of arts and culture in Western New York is essential in creating a vibrant and dynamic community especially with the small to mid cultural organizations within the City of Buffalo. Much of the excitement in our city revolves around all of the cultural assets in our city. A thriving cultural life generates a better education for our youth, income for our tax base and quality jobs. My administration will work collaboratively with all of the cultural institutions in the City of Buffalo.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Buffalo?**

Americans for the Arts “Arts and Economic Prosperity III” report states that the annual economic impact by the arts and cultural organizations had an impact of \$155.29 million on the local economy. A rich cultural life generates quality jobs, income and tax revenue. When elected mayor of the City of Buffalo I will work with the IDAs to attract new businesses and professionals to all of our unique neighborhoods throughout the city. Cultural funding is an absolute necessity.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Buffalo?**

The arts, cultural and heritage assets play an essential role in the broader economic development strategy of our entire region. When elected mayor I would ensure that our Arts Commission and Preservation Board would work with the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau and all of the cultural organizations in our area to capitalize on these assets, recognizing that they are part of the region’s basic infrastructure for sustainable economic development and should be invested in accordingly. Hiring a preservation expert.

**What do you see as your role in improving education in Buffalo, and how does a quality arts education factor into your vision?**

The biggest barrier to improving the public education for Buffalo’s children is the unwillingness of leadership to be accountable and implement major changes for the sake of children.

I am the leader that will be accountable for the solutions. I intend to implement structural and operational changes including aggressive policy and legislation, accountability mechanisms, and a complete arts program to fully utilize the power of the office to improve public education for children in Buffalo.

**If elected, will you decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations and establish a merit-based, peer review process for cultural funding allocations such as the Buffalo Arts Funding Advisory Committee?**

Work with the Buffalo Arts Commission and ensure that appointments and funding are current and maximized. Actively work with the commission and its Arts and Cultural Funding Advisory Committee to recruit new businesses to increase our tax base.

**Will you enforce the One Percent for Public Art ordinance already on the books that requires all projects receiving city funding to allocate one percent of the total project to public art?**

Yes, enforcing the one percent funding for new projects will help establish our city as friend to the arts, thereby recruiting more businesses and professionals to be part of a cultural renaissance in Buffalo.

# **Erie County Legislature:**

## **Questions:**

- 1. Please list your top three priorities if elected.**
- 2. What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in your district?**
- 3. What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**
- 4. How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**
- 5. What do you see as your role in improving education in Erie County, and how does a quality arts education factor into your vision?**
- 6. Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**
- 7. Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

## **TIMOTHY R. HOGUES**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 1st District**

**Current occupation: Erie County Legislator, 1st District**

1. My top three priorities focus on: Improving public safety throughout the 1st legislative district. Working with the community, Say Yes (Buffalo), ECC and other educational partners to help improve the performance of the students in the Buffalo Public School system. Ensuring the people that live in the 1st District have access to quality health care facilities
2. The arts are the heart of our community—especially in the 1st district. From the Theater District to Allentown to Historic Polonia where the noted Adam Mickiewicz Library has developed into a thriving theater and dramatic circle, introducing world-renowned drama to Western New York. Utilizing the talents of local artists. Our community utilizes the many historic treasures that exist in Western New York, and is pivotal in developing young artists and their talents.
3. Economic development must thrive off a “chain reaction” sequence. We want both residents and visitors alike to attend a play, have dinner, purchase gifts and use our transit system during a day out in the community enjoying the arts. Revenue generated will course back into the community, advancing progress and financial growth.
4. I would develop a marketing campaign that promotes and encourages the community to come out and get involved in showing off our great community! We will hold events that get the word out about current and potential tourist attractions, and energize the community to attract potential tourists through word of mouth and electronic and social media.
5. As a County Legislator, I continue to support and assist programs in the city of Buffalo aimed at improving the performance of the Buffalo Public Schools. Skills developed from participation in a quality arts education

will not only transfer to other academic areas, but also foster invaluable creative thinking, teamwork, articulation, self confidence and cognitive skills in students.

6. The County Executive, in his four year plan, has already budgeted for a modest increase in funding over the next three years. I support that plan in order to sustain our cultural programming and cultural tourism.

7. I am open to any discussion intended to support and promote the cultural community.

## **BARBARA MILLER-WILLIAMS**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator 1st District**

**Current occupation: Retired, Buffalo Police Department**

1. a) Promote job training and economic development initiatives resulting in high quality of life Living Wage employment opportunities for area residents. b) Allocate adequate funding directed to our Arts and Cultural Groups and Library Services throughout the County. c) Insure that Child Care Subsidies, Health Clinic Services and all other Human Service Programs remain a top priority of the Administration and the Erie County Legislature.

2. The role of arts and culture, as a community asset, is critical in determining specific ways to strengthen cultural values while preserving heritage and history throughout our diverse neighborhoods. The role further serves as a revenue generating resource which has proven to benefit our local economy while spurring local economic development and enhancing the quality of life for all residents and showcasing our region to visitors from around the world.

3. In my plan, the role of arts and culture groups will be to help stimulate economic vitality as an inclusive partner with Erie County government. The Plan will ensure that funding continues to be allocated to existing groups as well as including new initiatives. I plan to encourage citizen participation, community group input, and promote the marketing of our arts and cultural groups throughout our region as an exciting destination point.

4. Promote and partner with community partners through creative “placemaking”, a term referring to the development of distinctive, livable places through community engagement. By ensuring that the Legislature works with the Buffalo Niagara Visitors Bureau, the Arts Services Initiative of Western New York, Inc., Educational Institutions, etc., I would advocate that the Buffalo region be further utilized as the host region for local, state and national venues focusing on our cultural assets.

5. My role will be to collaborate with local School Districts, partnering with arts and cultural communities as an advocate promoting art/music education as critical to human development which helps shape the social and cultural identity of each student throughout our diverse school systems. Would ensure the continued funding of Afterschool/Summer Programs, particularly those focused on culturally based curriculums, inclusive of site visits to cultural organizations fostering interest in the arts.

6. I would increase the Operational Funding for the Cultural Organizations to ensure that the services are adequately provided and allow them the opportunity to build their mission and vision without annual funding deficiencies.

7. I am in support of the Erie County Cultural Resource Advisory Board which provides assistance regarding matters concerning cultural agencies funding. I further support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector.

## **BETTY JEAN GRANT**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 2nd District**

**Current occupation: Incumbent**

1. a) Growing the economy by working to bring jobs and other resources to our community. b) Making sure libraries are open and adequately funded. c) Supporting increased funding for the Arts.
2. The arts and cultural to serve to educate and uplift the spirits and to increase the residents to master artists and performers from the past as well as cultivating future generations of artists.
3. To support projects such as the Darwin Martin House, Michigan Street Baptist Church and the Michigan Street Heritage Corridor and the Hispanic Heritage Corridor. These initiatives will help increase cultural awareness and bolster employment in our community.
4. I would encourage local government to work with the county and state agencies to maximize cultural resources and to jointly work on projects that will advance the overall projects.
5. I believe arts and music as well as exercise or physical education, should be mandatory in our public school.
6. I would vote to increase funding. I fought hard to restore funding to the Arts that was cut during the Collins Administration.
7. Absolutely. I believe the cultural sector must be proactive and aggressive in forming this committee.

## **JOYCE NIXON**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislature, 2nd District**

**Current Occupation: CEO—National Inner Cities Youth Opportunities Inc.**

1. a) Education: Providing access to a low-cost, quality education. We need to give our teachers, parents, children and schools the resources they need to succeed. b) Job Development and Training: Bringing more jobs to our area and providing people with the skills needed for demand occupations. c) Arts, culture and recreation: I have been providing these types of programs at N.I.C.Y.O. for the past 25 years. I want to increase funding for all programs that can effectively deliver these services.
2. Arts and culture can be used as gateways for civic participation and engagement. They create empathy among participants and exert a powerful influence on societal development. Artists often challenge commonly held perspectives with innovative thinking. They raise awareness about social issues, break down barriers to cross-cultural understanding, and inspire creative ideas. In Buffalo, our arts and cultural groups bring different communities together and improve our quality of life.
3. We need to integrate the vision of business leaders with local artists in finding creative solutions to increasing our economic development. I propose the development of “Cultural Districts” and “Arts Enterprise Zones” that create spaces for artists and other creative talent to cluster, interact, and thrive. By locating firms, artists, and cultural facilities together, a multiplier effect can result and thereby improve our competitive edge in attracting visitors (and their money) to Buffalo.

4. First, we must “Protect, Preserve and Restore” our historic landmarks and cultural assets. A plaque stating “on this site a great building once stood” can’t tell the story. The Erie Canal and the Darwin Martin house are good examples of important preservation and restoration projects. We have tremendous cultural assets in Buffalo and we need to market them more effectively by providing resources to the organizations that are charged with that task.

5. I will be an advocate for giving our schools the resources they need to effectively teach our young people. Keeping music and art programs in all Buffalo schools will be one of my goals. Research and studies have shown us that music improves our capacity to learn. Statistics show that playing an instrument pays off; there is a direct correlation between playing a musical instrument and achieving higher grades. Fine arts programs, like those available at BAVP school should be expanded.

6. I would significantly increase the County budget, because of the social and economic benefits. I will call on the County Executive to establish an annual dedicated source revenue for Arts & Cultural organizations from the Casino gambling revenues.

7. A resounding yes! We also need to make sure that the Erie County Legislature’s Cultural Resources Advisory Board is fully functional and that any independent committee that is created, coordinates with that Board to get the necessary resources.

## **LYNN M. MARINELLI**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 3rd District**

**Current Occupation: Erie County Legislator—3rd District**

1. Top 3 priorities are: a) Economic Development. b) Job Creation. c) District Office Constituent Services.

2. Beyond enrichment values, cultural organizations play a major role in generating regional economic growth and identity.

3. The allocation of discretionary funding to support cultural organizations is part of what the legislature can do to enhance the role that arts and culture currently play in local revenue generation and employment.

4. My role as a board member of Visit Buffalo Niagara allows me to assist in developing policies and guidance related to increasing the level of both cultural and tourism regional activities.

5. I am an advocate for maintaining arts programming in education as an integral part of a comprehensive learning environment.

6. I have consistently voted and advocated for cultural organization funding within budgetary limitations and the constraints caused by external mandated costs.

7. Yes. The current Community Enrichment Committee, which I chair, provides the opportunity for dialogue on cultural sector funding.



# JENNIFER STERGION

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 3rd District**

**Current Occupation: Attorney, Self-Employed**

1. a) Proper funding, staffing, and staff retention of the County's Veteran Service Agency. b) Expansion of community and private volunteer sports and arts services offered in schools. c) Directing the conversation of county legislature on county-specific issues, such as: addressing the needs of children freed for adoption and under DSS supervision; officer safety and mental health services for those in the jail and holding center; greater cooperation between the county government and community services in providing direct-care services to people within the community; expansion of urban gardening programs.

2. The arts are critical to any redevelopment plan. The arts are the driving force to local business-open-air concerts bring people to the community to eat and shop. Art galleries provide art classes, lectures and culture to neighborhoods. Art belongs in schools-playing musical instruments enhances academic performance (scholarships for our students!). Most restaurants in town have cooperative arrangements with local galleries to show and sell local art. Living and working in and among art elevates us all.

3. It starts with community. I love murals-they turn empty space for would-be vandals into works of art that the community can create together. It empowers people to have a direct involvement in their environment and is the opportunity to teach our kids about local history. We absolutely must support programs like Shakespeare in the Park and encourage other organizations and corporations to continue and expand their sponsorship of music and theatrical events. Buffalo is the rust belt epicenter for the arts. We have world-class museums and countless free events. Let's bring outside disposable tourism income here!

4. Growing up I loved the "I love New York" campaign. I would love to see a commercial that offers rapid-fire snapshots of all our events, galleries, and artists for campaign about the awesomeness of Buffalo's arts scene. I live on Amherst Street and the work Marcus from 464 Gallery and Doreen from Artsphere has transformed this area. From galleries to lectures to history projects to murals, these things have coalesced this community into the thriving neighborhood it once again is. I'd also LOVE to see a CityPass, where people can buy one "hopper" ticket and go to all attractions for one price.

5. I would fight for greater partnership between community and corporate entities and the school system. There is a great deal of controversy surrounding the use of school buildings after hours and corporate sponsorship of school events. It is time we find a way to make it work. There isn't a great enough tax base in Buffalo to adequately support the arts, and raising property taxes significantly enough to cover those costs isn't the appropriate action either. We need to invite and have our community leaders invest in our schools, and empower them to pass on their talent and resources to the next generation.

6. This is a tough question. Erie County has undergone a significant financial upheaval over the past 60-70 years. We are coming back strong, but aren't where we can and should be-not yet. There have been times when cuts had to be made across-the-board. I am hopeful that this will not occur again. I will work hard that ensure that it does not happen on my watch.

7. Absolutely. I'm volunteer to create and be on it. I volunteer to do so even if I'm not elected. That's how I roll.

## **KEVIN HARDWICK**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 4th District**

**Current Occupation: Canisius College Assoc. Professor of Political Science**

1. a) Safeguarding the health and welfare of our community. b) Pursuing policies that will result in the creation and retention of good paying jobs. c) Broadening the tax base and promoting intergovernmental cooperation in order to maintain low property tax rates.
2. Arts and cultural institutions are essential elements of our community. They help define who we are and are basic to our quality of life. Specifically, in the City of Buffalo, arts and cultural groups are helping the city transition from a manufacturing hub to a web of unique neighborhoods where people enjoy living and visiting.
3. The impact of arts and cultural institutions goes beyond the the valuable effects of cultural tourism. In order for us to realize our goal of creating new good-paying jobs for our residents, we need to provide a climate conducive to attracting businesses, professionals and entrepreneurs. Maintaining a vibrant cultural community is an important aspect of these efforts.
4. As a legislator, it is my job to make sure that Visit Buffalo Niagara is given the resources it needs to accomplish its mission. They are the professionals when it comes to tourism, and I have a record of making sure they are equipped to do their job properly. My role is to oversee their work, not to micromanage it. With that said, we have a great story to tell here in Erie County, and cultural and heritage tourism is a great part of that story.
5. I am not sure we would be well-served by county legislators meddling in the affairs of the Buffalo Public Schools. Having said this, I strongly believe arts education is integral to quality elementary and secondary education.
6. I could support any of these options depending on a variety of budgetary factors.
7. I would not oppose creation of such a committee. I am not, however, a huge fan of dedicated funding for anything. My concern is the so-called “fungibility” argument, where dollars from a dedicated source merely replace, rather than enhance funding.

## **WILLIAM C. CONRAD III**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 4th District**

**Current Employer: High School Social Studies Teacher / Ken Ton Schools**

1. The three priorities that I will focus on will be: a) To protect our county services: including our arts and culturals. b) To rebuild our Infrastructure. c) To control the growth of taxes.
2. Arts and culture are vital to Erie County, they help us to be a well-rounded community. They expose youth to the outside world and help us all respect our cultural diversity.
3. Arts and culture are a large part of my vision of Buffalo and Erie County economic redevelopment. A part of my economic focus is to attract private industry to relocate here and appealing to the employer is an enormous role of our vibrant Arts and cultural scene. Many look to Buffalo from the outside as grim or another “rust belt”

community, however when they arrive and immerse themselves do they see us a viable option. We need to expose our Arts and culture to the world.

4. The first step is to build upon the work of advertising our Arts and culture in trade magazines, print media, and other publications. We need to be creative in our advertising and monopolize on opportunities. I can only think the piece the NY times had just run about the growth of Buffalo and want to offer marketing options to potential investors.

5. As an educator, I see the value of a quality arts education as it creates well rounded future citizens: whether to provide therapy or engage a conversation in history. A large part of Erie County government is funding programs that operate outside of the school day. I would push to offer more valuable programs during the summertime and afterschool hours that assist our community's students in their school work and I cannot not imagine these programs without art and cultural components.

6. I will vote to increase funding for cultural organizations if elected. We need innovation to create economic opportunities and cultural organizations help serve as pathway to this.

7. I will if the committee does not become a burden to the tax payers in the community.

## **ROBERT ANDERSON**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislature, 5th District**

Anderson did not respond to the survey.

## **CHRISTOPHER J. FELLOWS**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislature, 5th District**

**Current occupation: Retired**

1. To work with other members of the Leg to better understand and communicate with the public about what projects and services that the taxpayer are entitled to by the taxes already paid and how best to hold the line on future increases.

The improvement and accountability of the office of Social Services and its recipients are an ongoing program that require a continuing vigilance in its fiscal responsibility to the taxpayer.

To investigate what input or what County Gov. can do to more fairly educate our children throughout Erie County which should include the idea that some sort of dedicated funding of those arts and cultural interests in our community that have the ability to educate our children about our history and enhance ideas to grow our future.

To hold steady, and increase this type of funding should be part of the regular budget process.

## **THOMAS LOUGHRAN**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislature, 5th District**

**Current occupation: Incumbent**

Loughran did not respond to the survey.

## **ALAN GETTER**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 6th District**

**Current occupation: Assistant Superintendent, North Tonawanda CSD**

1. a) Develop and support a fiscally responsible budget plan. Not based on cuts to programs but making sure programs are run effectively and efficiently so more opportunities are available to our residents. This also means that cultural programs will be a priority in developing our financial plan. b) Reshape Erie County Government so that it can react to our residents and not be based on partisanship. c) Offer a county where good jobs are available with socially responsible businesses.
2. Arts and cultural programs are one of the primary reasons that a community grows. These opportunities offer residents many avenues to enjoy events outside of work or other responsibilities. Erie County needs to be a partner in supporting these programs.
3. My answers previously show that the community needs a vibrant cultural atmosphere if you want your community to thrive. I believe this is an important function of all of our governments including Erie County.
4. We have many untapped resources that if brought out to other parts of the country would greatly enhance our county. (E.g. last year there was a program looking at the architecture throughout Erie County which should be expanded for future growth. From what I read, it was a great success.)
5. As a graduate from Buffalo and an administrator in a school district, I support programs that offer a quality Arts program. The issue that many of us now face are the Tax Cap limits which put mandated programs against many of the non-mandated which limits these opportunities in schools. In regard to Buffalo Schools, and all public Schools, the Arts programs offered are the students' first opportunity to experience these programs, so effective and efficient funding is necessary.
6. Increase, as long as they are run efficiently and that other required programs are not reduced. Remember, the county also has the Tax Cap limits as previously mentioned.
7. The formation of a committee may be reasonable but I would need more details before fully supporting this concept. The committee would identify that the county would only be part of the solution as other entities must also be represented.

## **EDWARD RATH**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislature, 6th District**

**Current occupation: Incumbent**

Rath did not respond to the survey.

## **PATRICK BURKE**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 7th District**

**Current occupation: Employee at Gaelic American Athletic Association**

1. a) Stop Sprawl: It's ruining our urban center and our prime agricultural land. b) Fix ECC: One Campus with great programs. c) Revise the chaotic and costly County Highway System.
2. As a small sized city, Buffalo is incredibly fortunate to have such a vibrant arts and cultural community. It's part of our identity as a region and essential to developing and sustaining our economy.
3. They're vital. They're what set us apart from other city's. If tourism is going to grow here, it will in large part be due to the success of our arts and culturals.
4. You find the things that are really, really special or unique and then you promote them.
5. As a County Legislator, I will be an advocate. I would love to see Arts and Cultural organizations develop more partnerships with City schools and I would support the funding needed to do so.
6. As of now, I would hold steady because I haven't analyzed where resources are needed.
7. Of course.

## **LYNN M. DEARMYER**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislature, 7th District**

**Current occupation: Business development manager, Globalquest Staffing**

1. a) Work together with Town and City officials, along with the banks, to return foreclosed homes back on to the tax rolls. b) Hold the line on our County taxes. c) Ensure that the County continues to support arts and cultural organizations.
2. Arts and culture are a very important piece of our community. It is an excellent time for folks to learn about the different cultures we have in our area, the history of WNY, see a theater production or listen to music. I believe that we have a diverse arts and cultural arena here in Erie County and we need to protect and preserve it.
3. Preserving the arts and culturals helps in economic development not only in Buffalo but in WNY as a whole. Whether it is a German Festival in East Aurora, Elmwood Arts Festival in the City, Pulaski Day in Cheektowaga, Albright Knox, Shea's, City of Night at Silo City—these events and shows attract people to the

different areas within our region and in turn stimulate the economy. Having dinner or shopping in that neighborhood, parking, picking up a dish to pass at Wegmans all play a part.

4. As Legislators we will all have the ability to help ensure that these organizations receive our assistance not only through funding but also by personally attending and also encouraging others to participate by attending, volunteering and donating to these organizations.

5. Quality programs are essential to education and I do not like seeing them cut from the schools. As someone who was a part of the music program through all of my education in elementary, middle, high school and college through my violin playing and chorus I would work to see that they are not cut. These are excellent avenues for young people to be able to express themselves.

6. Since I am not yet an elected official and am not privy to the specifics of the County budget I am not able to give specifics. However, I will not vote to decrease the total amount of funding.

7. Yes.

## **ELIAS A. FARAH**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislature, 7th District**

**Current Occupation: Financial Advisor, Merrill Lynch**

1. a) Offer incentive programs to keep high school and college graduates in the region. b) Create opportunities to bring jobs to the region by offering tax advantages for companies who move into the area, as well as offering incentives for small businesses. c) Eliminate wasteful government spending, and integrate public-private partnerships.

2. Arts and Culture play a crucial role in the makeup of every community. It can define who you are and what you stand for. It can also, provide insight into your past and shed light on where you will go in the future. Buffalo is fortunate to have such a rich and diverse make up of cultures, it gives us the opportunity to integrate it into our plans for regional growth and prosperity. I firmly believe that growth isn't one dimensional, we need to integrate the arts and culture into any future plan.

3. I firmly believe that in Buffalo with our ever expanding Colleges and Universities, and proximity to Canada we can become a focal point for the arts. We have such a wide reach that we need to think outside of the box. We need to think about the arts as being the main source of development not as an after thought to compliment development. We need to tap into large markets such as Toronto and center our plans around creating a truly unique experience that sets us apart as a prime destination.

4. I am a huge supporter local schools; having Degrees from UB and Canisius College I am very passionate about the idea of integrating schools of every level (K-12 and beyond) with a heritage tourism program here in Buffalo. I think in order to grow as a region we need to do a better job of brining our youth to the forefront. We have students from all over the world here in Buffalo what better way to create tourism than to integrate it with education programs.

5. I am very passionate about improving education. I worked four summers teaching in inner city schools. I have witnessed the struggles of students first hand. I firmly believe we need to do everything we can to create well-rounded programs for students. If there is one thing I have learned about education it is that the arts foster creativity and interest in education. If we want to grow as a region, education is a critical factor. I will fight for increased funding for schools.

6. I would work to increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected. Having a business background I know that increased funding for cultural organizations provides a high return on investment and we NEED to invest in our future.

7. I think a committee should be formed, however creating a committee means nothing if people are not passionate about making a difference. I would hold open forums and bring together the public and local leaders to help facilitate committee formation.

## **RICHARD ZYDEL**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 7th District**

**Current occupation: Project manager, VMBG at Buffalo Federal Detention Facility**

1. Increase the scope of the Legislature from a body acting as a pass through for state mandates and performing ministerial functions to an active and aggressive unit focusing on economic development, regional planning and quality of life issues. Develop priorities for regional growth focusing on new urbanism—public investment in metrorail expansion and public transportation enhancements and continued development of our waterfront.

2. I am proud of my involvement in public financial support of our cultural institutions during my tenure as a member of the Cheektowaga Town Board. Cheektowaga boasts an active and robust cultural scene, one of the finest community symphony orchestras anywhere, an arts guild, a community chorus, and is the home to major cultural and ethnic festivals. I was happy to sponsor legislation to provide seed funding for these organizations in our town.

3. Cultural organizations are not wards of the state; they are economic development generators which turn over public funding back into the community many fold, hiring of staffs, procurement of goods and services which provide a multiplier effect in the economy. Culture means good business and should be viewed as such.

4. Identifying a central marketing and promotions unit, under the auspices of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, the UB Regional Institute, or another named agency that would act as a clearinghouse to perform public relations and tourism promotion functions for our area's greatest cultural assets. The Legislature, via its Community Enrichment Committee, could act as a conduit.

5. The role of arts education, specifically in our public schools, is more a function of the city's and the suburb Boards of Education. The Erie County Legislature has a minimal role in this process.

6. While the easy answer would be to provide a steadily rising grant stream to cultural organizations, a responsible elected official can only act within the parameters of overall budgets and financial constraints which exist in a certain window of time.

7. The Erie County Cultural Resources Advisory Board is that committee, and if their mission needs to be expanded from its current role of evaluating grant applications and making recommendations, I would certainly support that.

## **WYNNIE FISHER**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 8th District**

**Current occupation: Field experience coordinator, Buffalo State College**

1. a) Infrastructure; roads, bridges. b) Constituent services. c) Preserving funding for the arts.
2. The role of the arts in any community is a source of entertainment, a creative outlet and is vital to intellectual and cultural growth. In Buffalo, the arts allows our community to appreciate the diverse makeup of people living here.
3. There is a noticeable return on investment in the arts. When people spend money at a cultural event—they not only support the arts—but the community as a whole. They eat at a locally owned restaurant, use public transportation and walk through the city. This is already becoming tangible change for Buffalo. By re-opening Main Street to traffic, the Theatre District stands to gain.
4. As a legislator, I would ensure that the necessary resources are directed to promote cultural and heritage tourism to the area. I would also leverage public dollars for more private investment.
5. Our community needs to be more involved in the education of our children. One way we can do this is by continuing to support the arts both in and out of the classroom. The arts are key to heightening student engagement and allows a creative outlet to meet the varied learning styles among students. This can ultimately lead to higher academic achievement.
6. While I do not know enough about the budget to make a firm decision, I would make a full overview of the budget a priority during my first weeks in office. I would commit to not decreasing funding for the arts.
7. Yes—a committee dedicated to discussing funding for the arts and cultural sector would allow for a wide array of ideas to inspire and enhance this conversation.

## **WES MOORE**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 8th District**

**Current occupation: Self-employed, financial services**

1. a) Job creation specific to manufacturing and R&D for medical field. b) Continued emphasis on county wide development and infrastructure. Including but not limited to: small business development, Vocational Training, Arts and Entertainment corridors. c) Focus on regional and national tourism for WNY.
2. Having a family heavily involved in local symphonies and orchestras I have been exposed to a litany of tremendous musicians and performers locally. Unfortunately I have also seen the drastic and negative effects of budget cuts and how they impact students and young performers ability to own and instrument (or rent), afford private tutors, and develop into the next WNY generation of artists. The existing role of our arts and entertainment community provides a very positive cultural experience.
3. I would like to see and emphasis on providing better facilities i.e. more band shells or studios, as well as a focus on existing local cultural capitals such as Hertel Ave and the local Universities and Colleges performing arts. I believe that planned future projects should always include cultural emphasis in their design plans.



4. It has been said that tourism+ heritage + culture = sustainable economies. The challenge to WNY will be to ensure that any development or infrastructure expansion must include the arts in its process. Tourism is a clean industry, there can be no foreclosed homes or blights or the tourism simply wont produce. I believe we have the culture and the heritage, we will continue to push for sustained development mindful of the heritage of Buffalo.

5. Improving education starts with the youngest of ages. Therefore as parents, citizens, and neighbors we must emphasize early exploration into the arts for our children. Whether it is painting, dance, or picking up a saxophone; exposure to the arts is only helpful to their personal development. Children who are in successful music ed programs statistically do better in school and have better attendance records.

6. I would vote to increase where feasible. Again, if looked at as an economic engine, cultural organizations will certainly offer a solid return on investment over time. And if our regional tourism is to work properly we will need to support the arts.

7. Yes, I would like to have a committee of public officials and citizen advocates all of whom have an interest in the success of our cultural organizations.

## **TED MORTON**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 8th District**

Morton did not respond to this survey.

## **SEAN NOWICKI**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 8th District**

Nowicki did not respond to this survey.

## **BRIAN BURKE**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 9th District**

**Current occupation: BMHA Housing Aide**

1. My top priority would be to end special interest and lobbyist power over our government by having publicly financed elections. If there is no political campaign or PAC for them to contribute to, they can no longer buy the favor of our politicians...legally that is. Second, would be economic development. The more positive investment that can be brought into our community the greater the economy will be for all of us. Third, would be general quality of life issues.

2. Art and culture play a big role in this community; not nearly enough as far as I am concerned. There is something to be said about being free to express yourself without having to feel the constant judgement of others. Art allows that. In communities where art and culture are prevalent the quality of life there is noticeably better than others.

3. Art makes you think and feel. Generally, people value those things. Clearly investors do. Try to find an affordable space on Elmwood Avenue. It's not going to happen. It is essential to expand the role of art in our community to grow our economy and the character of our people.
4. This community is very ethnically diverse. The people here are proud. There are festivals here celebrating a multitude of ethnicities and backgrounds. With the proper leadership and guidance this community could be a beacon for those that have a genuine appreciation for multiculturalism.
5. I was an art and photography major at McKinley H.S. in the City of Buffalo. I spent a quarter to a third of my school day in that class. That experience was greatly beneficial to me. It should be the norm for all students to have the opportunity to go to school and grow up in an environment that encourages you to be and express yourself. School shouldn't be just about academics, it should also be about developing the individual.
6. Investment into the arts should be a priority for us all. I would spend as much as I responsibly could on developing the arts county wide.
7. Absolutely. I believe that would greatly benefit the people of Erie County.

## **LYNNE DIXON**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 9th District**

**Current occupation: Incumbent.**

Dixon did not respond to the survey.

## **MICHAEL SCHRAFT**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 9th District**

**Current Occupation: PhD Candidate, Consulting**

1. Protect services for families, seniors, children and veterans.  
Work with all stakeholders to redevelop our waterfront land in Hamburg, Lackawanna and South Buffalo.  
Encourage economic growth through balanced budgeting and informed fiscal policy.
2. The arts and culture play a vital role in the overall development of any community. Specifically in Buffalo, it's ingrained into the fabric of our history. Developing our youth and community with a firm base in the arts is important.
3. Everything from Shea's Performing Arts to the Buffalo Bills has a role in the overall strategy of development in Western New York. As an Erie County Legislator I plan on working with all stakeholders in the arts and culture community to drive the economy forward.
4. I'd work closely with State and Federal officials to help identify potential funding sources to attract new cultural and heritage programs. Buffalo is rich in history with enormous potential for tourism programs and services.

5. Public and private schools should make the arts a priority in Buffalo. At an early age students identify and create life-long passions. The arts should be introduced, educated and developed with our young students. Cutting funding for our arts program should not take place.
6. I would work in a bi-partisan fashion to insure the correct amount of funding is allocated to our arts program. Our arts funding should be increased in areas where the community needs are prioritized.
7. Yes!

## **LAUREN GRAY**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislature—10th District**

**Current Occupation: Citi Regulatory Compliance**

1. a) Ensure that infrastructure throughout Erie County is well maintained and modernized with a focus on unsafe roads and bridges. b) Safeguard support for arts and culture in our community. c) Work to bring new development and jobs to Erie County.
2. By supporting Buffalo's unique cultural identity and thriving arts community, we can enhance what sets us apart from other cities. Together, in the process, we can draw newcomers and encourage residents to remain in the area.
3. Arts and cultural programs have proven a wise investment, promoting artists as well as locally owned businesses. By ensuring that Buffalo has a vibrant cultural identity, we will simultaneously provide support for other areas of the economy.
4. I will ensure that tourism in the Buffalo area receives ample support. The cultivation of Buffalo's rich past and innovative present will draw people to our region.
5. The arts need to be a constant presence in a student's life, in and outside the classroom. These classes and experiences serve as a productive outlet and keep students engaged in their education.
6. I will not decrease operational funding for cultural organizations, and intend to do a full overview of the budget if elected.
7. Yes, I want a multitude of voices and ideas to come together and work towards a better Buffalo.

## **ROBERT HAUGER**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 10th District**

Hauger did not respond to this survey.

## **JOSEPH LORIGO**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 10th District**

Lorigo did not respond to this survey.

## **JOHN MILLS**

**Office sought: Erie County Legislator, 11th District**

Mills did not respond to this survey.

## **Erie County Comptroller:**

### **KEVIN GAUGHAN**



**Office Sought: Erie County Comptroller**

**Current Occupation: Attorney; Founder, Let People Decide**

#### **Top three priorities if elected:**

1. Aggressively root out county government waste, misuse, or inappropriate expending of citizens' money.
2. Ensure that government spends citizens' money wisely, properly, and in a manner that nurtures those residents most vulnerable to life's harsh realities, not those whose private wealth buffer them from virtually every storm.
3. Restore a sense of humility to the idea of public service.

#### **What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

The contribution that arts and culture make to the human spirit is difficult to explain, but easy to feel. We are all enlarged by the natural canvass of Olmstead's Delaware Park, lifted by the elegance of Lloyd Wright's Darwin Martin House, soothed by the strings of our Buffalo Philharmonic, and humbled by the majesty of EB Green's First Presbyterian Church. Our community is blessed with unparalleled examples of human imagination. And they all must be celebrated and sustained.

#### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

Buffalo Niagara's economic resurgence rests on our ability to emphasize that which renders us unique. From the Elmwood Village's long narrative as an artistic community, and Buffalo's storied theater tradition, to the rich sound produced by Eliel and Eero Saarinen's Kleinhan's Music Hall, and the "angels in our architecture"—

Sullivan, Richardson, Lloyd Wright, and EB Green—we've always been a creative community. And our economic development efforts should be centered on this fact.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

Some 10 years ago, when Albany sought to bury our Commercial Slip, and with it the authentic Erie Canal history that only Buffalo possesses, I founded a national conference on waterfront development, heritage tourism, and our Erie Canal western terminus. The conference helped save our original slip and streetscape, and placed history at the center of our waterfront development. I learned then how to create citizen coalitions to advance cultural tourism I will continue to employ those skills.

**What do you see as your role in improving education in Erie County, and how does a quality arts education factor into your vision?**

Of all people, it's rocker Keith Richards who tells of how he was a lost, misfit adolescent. In a last-ditch effort to give him direction, his mother one day brought home a guitar and, as Richards relates, "my world, which to that moment had been black and white, turned into color." Music, painting, and the performing arts give voice to students otherwise unable to express themselves. Arts are indispensable to education. Shame on any school system which fails to honor this truth.

**If elected, will you decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations?**

Increase. At the height of the Nazis savage nighttime bombing of London in World War II, someone suggested to Winston Churchill that the city close all its theaters. Churchill replied, "If we close the theaters, then what are we fighting for?"

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I support dedicated cultural community funding. Perhaps, as should the minimum wage, cultural funding amounts should be tied to inflation. We don't need more committees to accomplish this. Just right-minded public servants.

**STEFAN IWAN MYCHAJLIW**



**Office Sought: Erie County Comptroller**

**Current Occupation: Erie County Comptroller**

**Top three priorities if elected:**

1. Continue building upon my reform initiatives. We completed a formal Audit Plan, one was not done since 2006. We finalized a Succession Plan to maintain the integrity of the office, one was not done going back to 1989. Our banking business has not been put out to competitive bidding since 2006. Those bids are being processed now.
2. Hold the line on government spending: I voluntarily reduced my own budget by almost \$500,000.
3. Reduce property taxes on our already overburdened families.

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Our seven-year-old daughter Mia Theresa is heavily involved in the arts, playing guitar and drums in and out of school. I am a proud graduate of the Buffalo Public School District, the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts. There are fond memories of performing professionally at the old Pfeiffer Theater on Main Street. Our community can thrive and survive by a strong arts community that some believe generates more revenue than our professional sports teams.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

Career politicians lack vision. Their only answer to generating revenue is to raise taxes on families that are struggling. By investing smartly in our arts community we can attract supporters who will come to Buffalo for shows and performances, visitors who travel more than an hour to get here. That way we are not “recycling” revenue within the borders of Buffalo. We can increase revenues and help drive Buffalo’s economic engine by promoting our artistic, theatrical and musical treasures.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

I am very proud of the statewide and national recognition Buffalo is now receiving because of our strong architectural history. It boils down to a smart and targeted marketing plan involving our cultural institutions and the Buffalo/Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau. The critical component of the long-term vision is to continually draw cultural dollars from outside of Erie County. If not, we are playing a failing “shell game” of taking potential revenue from one attraction to another.

**What do you see as your role in improving education in Erie County, and how does a quality arts education factor into your vision?**

My support of Buffalo Schools, especially art programs, is strong. I created an arts program where students create their own gallery at the Rath Building to put their work on display. I pay out of my own pocket to hold a “gala” for families and student artists. I proudly participated in their summer radio workshop to help students grow in the arts field. There are jobs in Buffalo, especially in health care, banking, and education. Now we need an educated workforce to fill those jobs.

**If elected, will you decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations?**

Under the Erie County Charter I monitor and report the County Executive’s management of the budget. Operational funding is determined by the County Executive and Legislature. I support smart investments that provide a measurable return to taxpayers

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

Productive and positive discourse on strengthening institutions can help stabilize future funding for our cultural sector. We need to work together to find multiple sources of revenue, not just relying solely on taxpayer-funded government handouts.

# **Niagara Falls City Council**

## **Questions:**

- 1. Please list your top three priorities if elected.**
- 2. What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Niagara Falls?**
- 3. What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Niagara County?**
- 4. How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Niagara Falls?**
- 5. What do you see as your role in improving education in Niagara Falls, and how does a quality arts education factor into your vision?**
- 6. Now that casino revenues have been reinstated, going forward what are your top three priorities for use of that money?**
- 7. How do you view Niagara Falls' role in regional projects and initiatives like the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council or "Buffalo Billion" projects?**

## **ROBERT J. ELDER**

### **Office Sought: Niagara Falls City Council**

- 1. a) Helping senior citizens with a program called H.O.M.E. (Help out modest elderly), which makes criminal offenders serve community service by helping out the senior citizens. Example: The Harsh Winters here in Western New York, no matter what age you are, your sidewalks must be shoveled or the city can fine you. That Senior wants to obey the law but can't. That Offender, That Community Service Worker goes and does the work for them at no cost to the city. b) The vacant homes here in Western New York. We have over 22 trade schools here in Western New York and if we can get these schools to work on these vacant homes to fix them up, we can sell them for revenue and the kids of the schools can get their hands on training so they can move on to the working world, Two birds with one stone. c) Last but not least, cleanup of the City from crime to trash in the alleys.**
- 2. The most important thing in my opinion is to never leave arts and culture behind. I think Niagara Falls should have a taste of culture every year.**
- 3. All of Pine Avenue is called Little Italy. Flags from different nations are put up every year; I think we are doing good.**
- 4. Same as answer for question #2. I think more people would come just for that event.**
- 5. The future of our world falls on the younger generation and if we as adults do not teach them culture as we know it will be lost.**

I think we should allow the younger generation to have space in the Niagara paper to express themselves. Example: Best Photo taken or Best Poem or to just say how they feel about the world today. Just because someone is young doesn't mean they don't have a vision.

6. Fixing the streets of Niagara Falls. Paying the bills of Niagara Falls. Putting money into the Fraud Department of Public Assistant. Finding out what the people of Niagara Falls needs and wants is where the money should go along with holding some of the money for a rainy day like Emergency Disasters.

7. I feel us, as a whole of Western New York should work together in any endeavor. The saying goes, "United we stand, divided we fall."

## **SAMUEL F. FRUSCIONE**

**Office Sought: Niagara Falls City Council**

**Current Occupation: Teacher Certified Pre-K, Social Studies 7-12**

1. Reducing and stabilizing tax rates; Reducing crime; Reducing blight; Improving city services.
2. Public schools immerse children from start with music arts, drama. Not for profits also play a role in maintaining and supporting the arts. Ethnic societies also exist to maintain various cultures throughout city.
3. I will continue to privately support arts and culture in Niagara Falls. Private support is essential for growth and development.
4. I have been promoting Italian culture and Black History via cable access television. The city should remove all "red tape" that hinders the development of cultural tourism. Furthermore, I currently operate the Falls Street Emporium. We display various historical artifacts and provide street musicians a venue to perform or retail their work.
5. As a public school teacher for 22 years, arts, music, and culture has been a major part of my instructional practices. I have provided extracurricular music lessons and history lessons my entire career.
6. Public safety; Demolitions and blight; City services; Tax rate stabilization.
7. Niagara Falls will play a major role due to its international appeal and draw. If Niagara grows WNY grows.

## **KRISTEN M. GRANDINETTI**

**Office sought: Niagara Falls City Council**

**Current Occupation: Niagara Falls City Councilmember**

If elected: a) Continue rebuilding infrastructure. b) Create an atmosphere that is welcoming and affordable to all; including students, developers and families. c) To speak the truth to my constituents, stand up for what is best for the community and be available when needed to all of our citizens.



The role of arts and culture in our community is crucial. I teach in a school where a majority of the students live below the poverty level. It is unlikely that many of them get the proper exposure to arts and culture that will broaden their minds and teach them to be critical thinkers. It is an important outlet for emotional health and well-being. Too often the arts are the first thing to go when money gets tight. I believe that we as a community need to commit to arts and culture particularly when our schools are struggling. At any time and any age art and culture play an integral part in a person's well being. Whether it be music, sculpting, painting, paper, metal, photography, food or whatever...

In my community I make a strong effort to support the arts. Many of the arts here are brought to us through grass roots organizations such as the NACC. Unfortunately a lack of income and education often excludes art as a priority from many peoples' lives. But every person has a talent and everyone can appreciate some form of art.

Frankly, I leave heritage tourism to the experts like Tom Yots, Tom Lowe, and Paul Gromosiak. But I do support them when...and how I can.

Improving education in Niagara Falls is very important to me. The first thing is to make children feel safe and loved so that they can be free from anxiety and open to learning. The second is to trust them with the truth and allow them to make informed decisions.

I am personally deeply concerned that we do not properly educate our students about sex education particularly STDs and safe and healthy relationships. I am also concerned for GBLTQ community in my city. I worry for the students not getting, and I fear for their safety. A dear friend of mine struggled terribly and nearly lost his life. As we put more demands on our students I fear that arts and trades are taking a back seat. We preach about teaching to 8 different intelligences but ...and respecting different learning styles and people as individuals but we are trying to put all of our beautiful circles into a square mold.

This is why it is incredibly important to support the arts. Our schools are weighed down by test scores or else no funding threats. Come and spend a week in a classroom and see what these kids deal with on a daily basis. And we want to eliminate or minimize the importance of arts and culture? Shame on us. We need to support any organization that will support the arts. How many sad songs have been written, how many paintings, sculptures and photographs have been an outlet for the vast array of emotions we as humans feel. Removing arts and culture denies us of who we are deep in our souls.

Casino Funds-The top three priorities for these funds are 1st restoring any funds that were used to help us through this crisis. Second to complete the paving and infrastructure projects that we began and could not finish without this money. And third...do what is best for public safety and restore some funding to outside entities who improve the quality of life for our citizens.

I view the Buffalo billion and the NYREDC as a very important and incredible opportunity for our community to participate in the renewal of Western New York. I am pleased and proud that our mayor participates in these to regional projects. I learned a little late in life that it is not wrong to ask for help and play on a team. No one can go it alone.

# VINCE SANDONATO

**Office Sought: Niagara Falls City Council**

**Current Occupation: Law Student**

1. a) Eliminate life time health benefits for elected officials. b) Reduce and eliminate the two tier tax system. c) Eliminate duplicated services and eliminate wasteful spending internally.
2. Arts and culture can play a significant role in the revitalization of Niagara Falls if properly used to our advantage, especially in the Main Street district.
3. I would encourage the Main Street area to grow into an Arts and Theater district that rivals Buffalo. Having so many people in and around Niagara Falls, there is no reason we lack a powerful artisan community.
4. I would love for the NAAC to move near the Rapids Theater. I would like to attract similar minded businesses and attractions to locate there and that would trigger the growth of a desperate area. Having a successful arts and music festival this year on Main Street only proves that point. With the Rapids putting on headlining concerts; a person could view an art gallery before the show, have dinner at a quaint restaurant, or enjoy a drink after the show. All of this should be in walking distance.
5. Unfortunately as a city council member I cannot affect education, that's school board. However, I can improve the quality of life, work to bring in long term stable jobs, and embrace the growth of our city. While I do not support pumping money into a poor structure like the old NFHS, I do support the NAAC moving into a friendlier building so that they can be self sufficient and closer to an arts and culture district like Main Street. This would be a win-win for everyone.
6. a) Relieve tax payers from high taxes; b) Creatively encourage home and business owners to develop/maintain their property so that we build Niagara Falls neighborhoods from the inside out; c) Establish a city government that produces a surplus rather than a deficit, which enables the government to efficiently support the community.
7. It's essential that we are a part of the conversation and it's to our benefit to promote regionalism and growth. As a tourist city, marketing ourselves as a regional hub can keep visitors here longer. This generates more bed tax for longer stays and stimulates growth citywide. Also it is our job to encourage sustaining industries to build in Niagara Falls so that we can give residents jobs and wages to support a family.

# ANDREW TOUMA

**Office Sought: Niagara Falls City Council**

Touma did not respond to this survey.

## **RUSSELL VESCI**

**Office Sought: Niagara Falls City Council**

Vesci did not respond to this survey.

## **CHARLES WALKER**

**Office Sought: Niagara Falls City Council**

**Current Occupation: Manager Community Outreach Niagara Falls Memorial**

1. A.) 5 year plan for casino dollars rebuilding neighborhoods 1 block at a time (streets, sidewalks, trees, infrastructure, public safety). B.) Better communication between residence and city hall, to catch one another's vision for growth and prosperity in the city. C.) Economic development, economic development, economic development which in turn leads to jobs.
2. First let me say not what it could be or should be, but in general education, entertainment, enjoyment and arts also have a purpose and impact on a person's health. Art tells a story and in Niagara Falls we need to do a better job of telling our story. So I believe it can play a much bigger role in the city of Niagara Falls.
3. Major role! With the work I have done with the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Commission and the work of the Federal Commission, Niagara Falls and the rest of Niagara County can move into a new era of economic prosperity with the focus on tourism generally and heritage tourism specifically. Documenting and interpreting the community's history relative to the Underground Railroad, abolitionist, their movement, and other reform related activities.
4. First introduce people to the history here, in particular the underground railroad. I have had conversations with others about doing a Road to Freedom Reunion in 2014. Invite developers and past residence who have moved away, everybody home for a weekend in which we promote the opportunity for development and the history around the Underground railroad. With the development of the new rail station at the crossing, others may find this as a great opportunity for investment.
5. My role would be similar to the role I have played in the past. I have been a supporter, a cheerleader and advocate for arts and music in the school system, and community particularly the NACC.
6. 1. Economic Development 2. Neighborhood Revitalization 3. Public Safety and Community Education
7. I believe Niagara Falls should play a major role. We have the Falls, visitors come from all over the world to view the falls. The name Niagara Falls known all over the world, more attractions more money they leave behind (tax base grows, jobs created). Our water ways, known for great fishing, We have the power plant (low cost power) We have a great labor force. I believe it's time Niagara Falls became the engine and the driving force for economic and tourism development in Western New York.