2021 Candidate Survey Responses

City of Buffalo Mayoral Candidates

Name: India Walton Democrat

No response received

Erie County Legislature (All districts)

District 1

Name: Howard J. Johnson Democrat
Current Occupation: Erie County Legislator District 1

Cultural agencies currently receive $6.9M total from the County (funding is spread across 102 total organizations). Would you support continued, and steadily increased funding for arts and culture through the County Arts Funding process?
Yes.
Optional comment: I support a steady increase of County funding for the arts and culture.

In 2021, there were 10 newly funded arts and cultural organizations (out of 102 in total) in the County Arts Funding process. Every year new organizations in our County become eligible to apply for funding (due to how many years they have been a nonprofit, or other qualifying requirements). Therefore, this increases the need for overall increased County support. Would you maintain the current County art funding levels ($6.9M total) and maintain a historic annual increase of 5% each budget year so that arts organizations in the entire County can provide accessible arts programs for all of its residents?
Yes.
Optional comment: I support a annual increase as the arts organization has become an important component of the WNY community.
Name: April Baskin Democrat  
Current Occupation: Retired teacher  
Cultural agencies currently receive $6.9M total from the County (funding is spread across 102 total organizations). Would you support continued, and steadily increased funding for arts and culture through the County Arts Funding process?  
Yes.  
Optional Comment: Erie County’s Arts & Cultural Institutions are the lifeblood of our county. As funding for roads, parks, and libraries grows, so must the funding for arts & cultural organizations.

In 2021, there were 10 newly funded arts and cultural organizations (out of 102 in total) in the County Arts Funding process. Every year new organizations in our County become eligible to apply for funding (due to how many years they have been a nonprofit, or other qualifying requirements). Therefore, this increases the need for overall increased County support. Would you maintain the current County art funding levels ($6.9M total) and maintain a historic annual increase of 5% each budget year so that arts organizations in the entire County can provide accessible arts programs for all of its residents?  
Yes.  
Optional Comment: I believe 5% is a reasonable increase. There are many arts & cultural organizations that do not currently receive County funding. An increase on an annual basis would create space for more organizations to be funded.

District 3

Name: Lisa Chimera Democrat  
Current Occupation: Retired teacher  
Cultural agencies currently receive $6.9M total from the County (funding is spread across 102 total organizations). Would you support continued, and steadily increased funding for arts and culture through the County Arts Funding process?  
Yes.  
In 2021, there were 10 newly funded arts and cultural organizations (out of 102 in total) in the County Arts Funding process. Every year new organizations in our County become eligible to apply for funding (due to how many years they have been a nonprofit, or other qualifying requirements). Therefore, this increases the need for overall increased County support. Would you maintain the current County art funding levels ($6.9M total) and maintain a historic annual increase of 5% each budget year so that arts organizations in the entire County can provide accessible arts programs for all of its residents?  
Yes.
District 4

Name: John Bargnesi Democrat
Current Occupation: Self Employed

Cultural agencies currently receive $6.9M total from the County (funding is spread across 102 total organizations). Would you support continued, and steadily increased funding for arts and culture through the County Arts Funding process?  
Yes.
Optional Comment: As my wife is an art teacher, I have attended many art shows, and cultural events and support continued and increased funding. They are vitaly important for sustained growth in our area, and welcoming to visitors.

In 2021, there were 10 newly funded arts and cultural organizations (out of 102 in total) in the County Arts Funding process. Every year new organizations in our County become eligible to apply for funding (due to how many years they have been a nonprofit, or other qualifying requirements). Therefore, this increases the need for overall increased County support. Would you maintain the current County art funding levels ($6.9M total) and maintain a historic annual increase of 5% each budget year so that arts organizations in the entire County can provide accessible arts programs for all of its residents?
Yes.
Optional Comment: I am encouraged by increases in cultural organizations seeking county funding. If elected I will support continued increases in county funding for culturals.

Name: Spencer Kowal Republican

No response received

District 5

Name: Jeanne Vinal Democrat
Current Occupation: Attorney at Vinal & Vinal, P.C.

Cultural agencies currently receive $6.9M total from the County (funding is spread across 102 total organizations). Would you support continued, and steadily increased funding for arts and culture through the County Arts Funding process?  
Yes.
Optional comment: I wholeheartedly support fund the arts and cultures in Erie
County. I’ve attended many meetings, including the board meetings for the Jewish Repertory Theater, Alleyway Theater and other arts groups to encourage them to seek county funding. I am currently working with Visit Buffalo Niagara to include more options in their coupon books that support the arts in Erie County.

In 2021, there were 10 newly funded arts and cultural organizations (out of 102 in total) in the County Arts Funding process. Every year new organizations in our County become eligible to apply for funding (due to how many years they have been a nonprofit, or other qualifying requirements). Therefore, this increases the need for overall increased County support. Would you maintain the current County art funding levels ($6.9M total) and maintain a historic annual increase of 5% each budget year so that arts organizations in the entire County can provide accessible arts programs for all of its residents?

Yes.

Optional comment: Absolutely, as aforementioned, I actively encourage arts organizations to ask for more funding so that we can provide it for them in our annual budget. In the creation of my Christmas Markets Program that I’ve initiated, I am hoping it will employ many performing artists and create avenues for artisans and artists to make sales.

Name: Richard Wilkinson Republican
Current Occupation: General Manager Emerling CDJR

Cultural agencies currently receive $6.9M total from the County (funding is spread across 102 total organizations). Would you support continued, and steadily increased funding for arts and culture through the County Arts Funding process?

Yes.

Optional comment: The arts are a valued part of our community and its support is mandatory.

In 2021, there were 10 newly funded arts and cultural organizations (out of 102 in total) in the County Arts Funding process. Every year new organizations in our County become eligible to apply for funding (due to how many years they have been a nonprofit, or other qualifying requirements). Therefore, this increases the need for overall increased County support. Would you maintain the current County art funding levels ($6.9M total) and maintain a historic annual increase of 5% each budget year so that arts organizations in the entire County can provide accessible arts programs for all of its residents?

Yes.

Optional comment: The legislators should also have active engagement with our Arts organizations and be actively involved with their functions.

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District 6

Name: Ronald Schubert, Esq. Democrat
Current Occupation: Phillips, Lytle LLP – Partner Attorney
Cultural agencies currently receive $6.9M total from the County (funding is spread across 102 total organizations). Would you support continued, and steadily increased funding for arts and culture through the County Arts Funding process?

Yes.

Optional comment: Absolutely!!

In 2021, there were 10 newly funded arts and cultural organizations (out of 102 in total) in the County Arts Funding process. Every year new organizations in our County become eligible to apply for funding (due to how many years they have been a nonprofit, or other qualifying requirements). Therefore, this increases the need for overall increased County support. Would you maintain the current County art funding levels ($6.9M total) and maintain a historic annual increase of 5% each budget year so that arts organizations in the entire County can provide accessible arts programs for all of its residents?

Yes.

Optional comment: We must!!

Name: Christopher Greene Republican

No response received

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District 7

Name: Timothy Meyers Democrat

No response received

Name: Michael Zachowicz Republican

No response received

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District 8

Name: Frank Todaro Democrat
Current Occupation: Founder/President Collision Masters; Erie County Legislator

Cultural agencies currently receive $6.9M total from the County (funding is spread across 102 total organizations). Would you support continued, and steadily increased funding for arts and culture through the County Arts Funding process?

Yes.
In 2021, there were 10 newly funded arts and cultural organizations (out of 102 in total) in the County Arts Funding process. Every year new organizations in our County become eligible to apply for funding (due to how many years they have been a nonprofit, or other qualifying requirements). Therefore, this increases the need for overall increased County support. Would you maintain the current County art funding levels ($6.9M total) and maintain a historic annual increase of 5% each budget year so that arts organizations in the entire County can provide accessible arts programs for all of its residents?

Yes.

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District 9

Name: John Gilmour Democrat
Current Occupation: Erie County Legislator, District 9

Cultural agencies currently receive $6.9M total from the County (funding is spread across 102 total organizations). Would you support continued, and steadily increased funding for arts and culture through the County Arts Funding process?

Yes.

Optional comment: I support the County’s commitment to arts and cultural organizations and continued funding.

In 2021, there were 10 newly funded arts and cultural organizations (out of 102 in total) in the County Arts Funding process. Every year new organizations in our County become eligible to apply for funding (due to how many years they have been a nonprofit, or other qualifying requirements). Therefore, this increases the need for overall increased County support. Would you maintain the current County art funding levels ($6.9M total) and maintain a historic annual increase of 5% each budget year so that arts organizations in the entire County can provide accessible arts programs for all of its residents?

Yes.

Optional comment: Depending on the County’s financial status, I am amenable to annual increases, but cannot commit to an annual increase of 5% every year; it will have to depend on the County’s financial standing.

Name: Frank Bogulski Republican

No response received

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District 10
Name: Peter Schwan Democrat
No response received

Name: Joseph Lorigo Republican
Current Occupation: Attorney in private practice/County Legislator
Cultural agencies currently receive $6.9M total from the County (funding is spread across 102 total organizations). Would you support continued, and steadily increased funding for arts and culture through the County Arts Funding process?
Yes.

In 2021, there were 10 newly funded arts and cultural organizations (out of 102 in total) in the County Arts Funding process. Every year new organizations in our County become eligible to apply for funding (due to how many years they have been a nonprofit, or other qualifying requirements). Therefore, this increases the need for overall increased County support. Would you maintain the current County art funding levels ($6.9M total) and maintain a historic annual increase of 5% each budget year so that arts organizations in the entire County can provide accessible arts programs for all of its residents?
Yes.

District 11

Name: John Mills Republican
No response received

Niagara County Legislature (All districts)

District 1

Name: Joseph S. Conti III Democrat
No response received
Name: Irene M. Meyers Republican
No response received
District 2

Name: Jamie L. Symmonds Democrat

No response received

Name: Rebecca J. Wydysh Republican

No response received

District 3

Name: Mark J. Grozio

No response received

Name: John L. Sczepczenski
Current Occupation: Retired

Will you support dedicating a portion of the County’s annual budget to annual operating grant funding for Arts & Cultural Organizations beyond individual Legislative Appropriations to ensure continued growth and success of these economic and tourism drivers in Niagara County?
Yes

Will you work to include Arts & Cultural leaders in county efforts such as appointing them to groups and commissions both within and outside of county government?
Yes

District 4

Name: Jeffery Elder Democrat

No response received

Name: Owen T. Steed Republican
No response received

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District 5

Name: Christopher A. Robins
Current Occupation: Niagara Falls Board of Education

Will you support dedicating a portion of the County’s annual budget to annual operating grant funding for Arts & Cultural Organizations beyond individual Legislative Appropriations to ensure continued growth and success of these economic and tourism drivers in Niagara County?
Yes

Will you work to include Arts & Cultural leaders in county efforts such as appointing them to groups and commissions both within and outside of county government?
Yes

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District 6

Name: William D. Kennedy II Democrat

No response received

Name: Christopher P. Voccio Republican

No response received

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District 7

Name: Jesse P. Gooch
Current Occupation: Self

Will you support dedicating a portion of the County’s annual budget to annual operating grant funding for Arts & Cultural Organizations beyond individual Legislative Appropriations to ensure continued growth and success of these economic and tourism drivers in Niagara County?
Yes
Will you work to include Arts & Cultural leaders in county efforts such as appointing them to groups and commissions both within and outside of county government?
Yes

Name: Daryl T. Bodewes
No response received
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District 8

Name: Richard L. Andres Jr.
No response received
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District 9

Name: Randy R. Bradt
No response received
Name: Joseph J. Kissel
No response received
________________________________________________________
District 10

Name: David E. Godfrey Republican
No response received
________________________________________________________
District 11
Name: Anthony J. Nemi Republican
No response received

District 12

Name: William J. Collins Sr.
No response received

District 13

Name: Anita Mullane
No response received

Name: Richard E. Abbott
Current Occupation: Alderman City of Lockport, retired
Will you support dedicating a portion of the County’s annual budget to annual operating grant funding for Arts & Cultural Organizations beyond individual Legislative Appropriations to ensure continued growth and success of these economic and tourism drivers in Niagara County?
Yes
Optional Comment: Extremely important that the remain a part of our community for MANY reasons!!
Will you work to include Arts & Cultural leaders in county efforts such as appointing them to groups and commissions both within and outside of county government?
Yes
Optional Comment: We have promote through inclusion

District 14

Name: Shawn Foti
No response received
Name: Sara L. Beilein Capen  
Current Occupation: Executive Director / Niagara Falls National Heritage Area  

Will you support dedicating a portion of the County’s annual budget to annual operating grant funding for Arts & Cultural Organizations beyond individual Legislative Appropriations to ensure continued growth and success of these economic and tourism drivers in Niagara County?  
Yes  
Optional Comment: I would like to research additional ways to generate revenue for Niagara County to support arts and cultural organizations. I am not sure that Niagara County has the existing infrastructure to administer grants.  

Will you work to include Arts & Cultural leaders in county efforts such as appointing them to groups and commissions both within and outside of county government?  
Yes  
Optional Comment: Absolutely!  

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District 15  

Name: Michael A. Hill Republican  

No response received