

## Greater Kalamazoo Association of REALTORS®

### Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire

**Name:** Ann Nieuwenhuis

**Candidate for:** Kalamazoo County Commissioners

**Resident address:** 5833 East HJ Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49048

**District:** 15                      **Political Party Affiliation:** Republican

**Age:** 57                              **Occupation:** Emergency Planning Specialist

**Previous public offices held:** Current County Commissioner 2009-2010

#### Reasons for seeking this office?

Michigan citizens have endured a public-policy roller coaster of reckless fiscal decisions long enough. County Commissioners need to utilize their sphere of influence and impact the state's decisions by actively participating in the discussion stage in partnership with The Michigan Association of Counties (MAC). As a member of the MAC Agriculture and Tourism committee, I have had first-hand experience to see the difference a Commissioner's involvement can make in the state's decision making process.

I am seeking the office of County Commissioner so I can continue to be actively engaged- locally, regionally and statewide- in the critical conversations about today's problems. We need to approach issues in a realistic manner and work together to confront our long-term problems. We must come to grips regarding the significant reduction in state and local revenues by re-thinking the role of government and accordingly reduce the size and scope of each level of government appropriately.

#### Please answer the following questions as completely as possible:

1. *How much do you expect to spend in the primary election \$ \$2000*
2. *If successful in the primary election, how much do you plan to spend in the general election? \$5,500*
3. *How many volunteers are actively involved NOW in your campaign? 15*
4. *List the endorsements you have received from other organizations?*  
\*The GKAR REALTORS organization is the first endorsement I am seeking
5. *How much money will you or have you personally contributed to your campaign?*  
Up to \$4000.00
6. *Would you welcome financial support or recommendation of the REALTOR organization?*  
Yes

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#### **Campaign Treasurer**

**Name:** Roland Taylor

**Address:** 5944 HJ Avenue  
Kalamazoo, MI 49048

**Phone:** 269-365-3461

#### **Campaign Manager**

**Name:** Thomas Nieuwenhuis

**Address:** 5833 East HJ Avenue  
Kalamazoo, MI 49048

**Phone:** 269-998-2048

## Kalamazoo County Commissioner Interview Questionnaire

### ***1. If elected or re-elected, what will be your top priority?***

My top priority will be to actively protect Kalamazoo County from additional reckless state budget decisions. The State of Michigan is in desperate fiscal shape and with less state and Federal money available, our legislators have huge budget holes to fill. Many of their fiscal decisions are based on dilapidated and economically stagnant areas of our state and can have serious negative consequences for our community.

An example of a key consequence is the economic burden of unfunded mandates which are a serious financial threat to local governments. Together we need to join forces and speak with one voice regarding the fiscal and social damage of state enforced unfunded mandates to local governmental entities.

Other pending state legislation could cause counties to lose revenue due to reform arbitration legislation, proposed cuts in revenue sharing, the loss of Sheriff secondary road patrol monies and counties could experience expense increases like the \$18/day/child for the proposed state administered foster care.

I pledge to stay informed on upcoming issues and be a voice for our citizens in the decision making process to protect our community from further fiscal damage.

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#### **2. What would you do to help foster economic development in the greater Kalamazoo area?**

My plan has three elements to foster economic development include:

- a. Reinvest in our state's transportation infrastructure. This investment will create jobs, attract businesses, increase property values and ultimately save tax payer dollars. This can be done by ensuring that gas tax money actually is spent on our State's infrastructure and not siphoned to other state departments.
- b. Attract and retain people who can incorporate knowledge, technology and innovation into regional products and services that will succeed in today's global economy.
- c. Strengthen the essential components of agricultural by supporting the agricultural processing industry, encourage partnerships to enhance environmental stewardship and invest in the development of new technologies.

#### **3. What initiatives would you propose or support to get the greater Kalamazoo area moving forward in regards to solving the current housing crisis we are experiencing?**

We need to help homeowners and renters understand their options and to take action before it is too late. The high number of foreclosures and abandoned properties has caused safe neighborhoods to become unstable areas. Together we need to fight foreclosures and prevent wasteful spending at all governmental levels we need to re-frame our social program guidelines and work from a cost-effective viewpoint.

#### **4. Should Kalamazoo County continue to contribute to Southwest Michigan First?**

The recent SW MI First report indicated that the County's \$75,000 contribution is less than 2% of their budget. This indicates that there is more than adequate financial support from other segments of the community so I am not in favor of increasing the amount. I appreciate and applaud the work done by SW MI First. As long as the quality of work continues, I plan to endorse a continuation of this County general fund contribution of \$75,000 for the 2011 and 2012 budget as an integral part of our economic development plan.

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**5. Do you support the Sheriff's current plan for the expansion of the jail?**

I am a strong advocate for funding programs that intervene and prevent future crime within our community and would prefer to direct the monies to these projects. I do understand the safety need for jail renovation, however; I would prefer to see the structural deficiencies of the jail addressed rather than have the emphasis on increasing jail inmate capacity. More beds require additional personnel. I do not foresee the County general fund being able to sustain additional staff, especially with the pending state arbitration changes, the loss of jail inmate mental health monies, and the continued threat to take away jail reimbursement.

**6. Do you support placing the "Arena/Events Center" Excise Tax on the countywide ballot?**

I do not believe that County government should be in the business of managing an arena/event center. We must be fiscally responsible in these tough economic times. Increasing taxes on an unproven venture is a risky business. I am in support of re-developing the proposed area but not at the expense of the taxpayers and/or local businesses.

In order to approve adding this issue to the ballot, Commissioners were given the responsibility to ensure that general funds would not be at risk for any event building costs and/or the operation during the "life" of this center. The vetting report did not convince me that the excise tax would support all of the building costs and I certainly am not convinced that citizens would spend adequate discretionary dollars to keep the center financially solvent. Since these issues were not resolved, I would not be in support of placing this excise tax on the countywide ballot.

**7. Do you support the continuation of the Local Housing Assistance Fund and if yes, what is your proposal?**

As a community, we need to find alternative ways to assist families with housing issues rather than starting and stopping programs. The administrative transaction costs are too expensive! Rather than have a mission to find homeless people permanent housing and jobs, let's concentrate on preventing homelessness in the first place.

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***8. Will you accept RPAC funds for your campaign if endorsed by GKAR?***

I welcome your financial support. I am proud of my accomplishments during my first term. I am honored to serve the people of Kalamazoo County as a County Commissioner representing District 15. I promise to continue to serve the citizens of Kalamazoo County to the best of my ability using the full extent of my experience and my expertise. I look forward to a second term to work with the County Board to achieve a long-term vision for a vital Kalamazoo County.