

Lyon Township 2024 Primary Election Candidate Summary

July 6, 2024

For Lyon Township Board:

The Higgins Lake Political Action Committee (HLPAC) strongly recommends and supports the following candidates for the Lyon Township Board in the August 6, 2024, Republican Primary:

Julie Tatro – Supervisor (Former Interim Supervisor)

Doug Schnell – Clerk (Incumbent)

Susie Grier – Treasurer (Incumbent)

Lenette Tomak – Trustee (Incumbent)

Eric Carlson – Trustee (Incumbent)

These candidates are experienced public officials who are dedicated to serving the community and protecting Higgins Lake. During their tenure they have brought economic stability to the Township, have been successful in the collection of delinquent property taxes, improved the trash collection service, and improved the parks and cemetery, among other things. Additionally, they continue to pursue the potential of an area wide sewer system (nothing is decided, they are still investigating) and have passed a septic inspection ordinance. They are looking to pass a short-term rental ordinance to bring regulation to this growing concern.

Their opponents have no experience in local government and are running on a platform of undoing everything the current Board has or is trying to accomplish including undoing the septic ordinance and discontinuing any analysis of a sewer system.

There is a website for the candidates we are supporting, it is <https://effectivelyontownshipleadership.net/>. On the site you can learn more about each of the candidate's background and accomplishments as well as watch videos where they introduce themselves. It is worth taking a few minutes to review the site before you vote.

Gerrish Township 2024 Primary Election Candidate Summary

July 3, 2024

Gerrish Township Supervisor: For the position of Gerrish Township **Supervisor** there is one candidate running unopposed. Brian Hill, the longtime GT Police Chief was recently appointed Interim Supervisor and will be running to be elected to return to that position. It would be hard to find another person with greater knowledge of the Township operations or greater enthusiasm for this position. Gerrish Township will be in good hands with supervisor Hill. Among his strengths are exceptional organizational skills, future planning and attention to detail.

Gerrish Township Treasurer: There are four candidates running for the position of GT **Treasurer** in the Primary. One candidate is running unopposed as a democrat, Megan Haertel. Ms. Haertel was not reviewed by our board at this time but will be for the general election in November.

There are three candidates running as Republicans. **Suzanne Brewer** has 40 years of banking and auditing experience. Although Suzanne is new to township politics, she welcomes the opportunity to research community issues and be engaged in methods that promote fiscal responsibility within the township. If elected, Ms. Brewer would begin by reviewing community issues and developing an understanding of what her constituents want and need.

The second candidate for GT Treasurer is **Mary Ellis**. Mary's background is as a small business owner. Her regular duties included maintaining financial records, drawing up contracts and handling and organizing business administration on an everyday basis. Ms. Ellis believes that if properly funded she would approve of the proposed sewer project moving forward and she is also concerned with other environmental issues. She believes that being proactive and taking preventative measures to address environmental issues is important. She stresses concern for the fiscal health of the Township and cites one of her goals is to engage in a continual search for improvement opportunities related to township finances. Mary's short and long term goals both involve striving to improve processes to efficiently operate the treasurer's office for the benefit of the township's residents.

The third candidate for Treasurer on the Republican side of the Primary is **James Anderson**. Jim is a licensed CPA with 40 years' experience, specialized in government accounting and audits. Notably, he has previously audited Gerrish Township for the past 20 years. Mr. Anderson has been assisting the current Gerrish Township Board in general accounting, payroll, budgeting and treasury functions. If elected, he will take office with full knowledge of the financial strengths and weaknesses within Gerrish Township and continue to make the improvements he has been working on over the past couple years. Mr. Anderson is also aware of Higgins Lake issues, having been a resident since 1989. He believes that a sewer system will definitely improve pollution caused by sewage and knows the importance of a healthy Higgins Lake to the community, both environmentally and financially. Jim has also represented the Higgins Lake Foundation for 25 years and supports the environmental issues that are being

addressed by the DASH boat and boat washing. More can be found about Mr. Anderson on his Facebook page, [James M. Anderson for Gerrish Township Treasurer](#).

Gerrish Township Trustee: There are four candidates for **Trustee** running for 2 available positions as Republicans in the August 6th Primary. Two are incumbents and one has served Gerrish Township in prior elected and appointed roles.

The first Trustee candidate we will mention is incumbent Trustee **Mary Jo Oppy**. Mary Jo has been a Trustee for the past 3 years. Having not been involved in government previously Mary Jo now feels more comfortable with the job as Trustee. She makes a point to be available to meet with residents, and is an active member of the Gerrish Parks and Recreation Committee. Ms. Oppy is a strong supporter of the proposed sewer project and believes in protecting Higgins Lake from environmental concerns. She also believes that regulating short term rentals would be an advantage within our township.

The second Republican Trustee candidate is **Terry Newton**. Terry is also an incumbent and serves as the GT Board representative on the Planning Commission. He is also the sexton for the Gerrish Township Cemetery, responsible for managing the cemetery grounds, building and administration. During Terry's current term he has shown a commitment to the township and has been a capable participant in Township Board discussions. Mr. Newton believes it is necessary to find a solution that stops continual pollution of the lake, either by utilizing a sewer system, septic ordinance, or both. Terry sees the role of trustee as continually looking for solutions that make Gerrish Township a better community in which to live.

The third Republican Trustee candidate is **James Ostling**. Mr. Ostling has served Gerrish Township on many other occasions and in many other capacities. A long time resident of Gerrish Township, Jim was a member of the GT Zoning Board in the 90's and a member of the Planning Commission in the early 2000's. Jim was first elected to the position of Gerrish Township Trustee in 2004 and also served then as GT Board liaison to the Fire Department. Jim was very instrumental in securing funding from the DNR Natural Resources Trust Fund in order to purchase what is now the Gerrish Township Marina. At that time Mr. Ostling was involved in researching the mechanics of such a project including grant applications, budgeting, addressing adjacent riparian rights and design work for building modifications and development of boat slips. Jim also served as Planning Commission board representative and was instrumental in an update of the Township Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan. Most recently, Jim served as member, and subsequently Chair, of the Planning Commission until 2023. Mr. Ostling sees many challenges in the township and once again desires to be involved in seeking solutions. He believes that Gerrish Township has been a leader in township governance and wants to be a voice for the citizens in all areas, fiscally, recreationally, professionally and in resource management. Jim believes that a sewer system may be necessary, and that water quality of the community's wells should be understood, as well as the water quality of the lake as all are important to a successful Gerrish Township. More can be found about Mr. Ostling on his Facebook page, [Ostling for Gerrish Trustee](#).

The fourth candidate for Trustee is **Edward Anderson**. Mr. Anderson did not participate in our discussions and the HLPAC board collectively knows nothing about his

candidacy. We do know that he is not related or affiliated in any way with Treasurer Candidate James Anderson.

Gerrish Township Clerk: Last, there are two candidates for Gerrish Township Clerk on the Republican ballot in the August Primary. **Michelle Squires** is the current clerk and is running for re-election. She has 3 years of experience in the position. Her opponent is **Larry Kruger**, who is the current GT Treasurer. Neither of these candidates responded to HLPAC's request for comment on their views.

Roscommon County Commissioner 2024 Primary Election Candidate Summary

July 11, 2024

County Commissioner District 1 (includes Lyon Township):

There are two candidates running for County Commissioner in District 1 as Republicans. **Mark Schaefer** has municipal experience from another county. Mark was Deputy Supervisor of Secord Township in Gladwin County. Mark also has private sector experience as Global Operations Manager with PBMS where he worked with budgeting and business analysis. Mr. Schaefer has analyzed the Roscommon Commissioner's role and believes that there are many challenges. His plan, if elected, would be to update the development plan of 2022, identify goals and work to execute and accomplish those goals. He feels that the county is facing serious budgetary issues and that they need to be addressed. As regards areas of concern for Higgins Lake, Mark does support the idea of a sewer system and believes that the court ordered legal lake level is important to maintain in compliance with the law.

The second County Commissioner candidate in District 1 is **David Russo**. Mr. Russo did not participate in our discussions.

The HLPAC believes that Mark Schaefer would be the best pick in this race. After the election in 2022 there were 3 new commissioners. Those three individuals have shown a willingness to lead and to establish new ideas for how the county commissioners should work to accomplish the business of the county. We think that Mr. Schaefer would be an addition to the board in that same fashion. Mr. Russo has been a commissioner for over a decade. He has been the commissioner in charge of the dam at Houghton Lake that has been neglected, also for over a decade, and is now in a state of disrepair that may necessitate millions of dollars to replace. Mr Russo was a member of the board in 2023 when the county voted to move the cost of dam maintenance at Houghton Lake, Higgins Lake and Lake St Helen, from the county to the lakefront property owners. The HLPOA is standing in legal opposition to the creation of a Special Assessment District (SAD) for Higgins Lake that is designed to continue in perpetuity, and for which over \$233,000 has already been spent in legal fees and engineering fees. Those fees would be assigned eventually to the Higgins Lake property owners and the county has yet to define a project that needs to be accomplished. Commissioner Russo was on the county board when these Special Assessment Districts were developed and

has staunchly elected to continue their development despite rising costs and requests by residents to reconsider.

When the new board was installed in January of 2023, Mr. Russo was one of two holdover commissioners from the previous board and was named the board chair. After a year of presiding over a board largely considered dysfunctional, Mr. Russo stepped down in early 2024 and the board began to run more smoothly. The HLPAC believes that a board change to Mr. Schafer would be an improvement for Roscommon County governance.

County Commissioner District 2 (includes Gerrish Township):

There are two candidates running as Republicans. Candidate **Kim Morley** is a local business owner who brings over 30 years of private sector health care leadership combined with experience in government, small business ownership, and nonprofit management. Kim previously served on the Board of Education for the Roscommon Area Public School District and is the current Board Chair for Munson Grayling Hospital and Board member for Munson Healthcare System. She is a 2014 graduate of the Michigan Political Leadership Program and Ambassador of the Great Lakes Bay Region Alliance Leadership Program. Kim and her husband, Bill Morley, are HLPOA members and owners of Pioneer Hills Marine in Roscommon.

Kim served as the chief executive officer of the Michigan Health Information Alliance (MiHIA), where she worked with a wide variety of key stakeholders – community leaders, employers, volunteers, federal and state government entities, providers, consumers and other health care industry representatives – to develop a sustainable roadmap for improved health in the fourteen-county Central Michigan medical trading area. Previous work experience includes being the Midwest Regional Business Manager for Mayo Clinic Health Solutions, various positions with Baylor Center for Health Promotion, Fort Worth Metropolitan YMCA, Johnson & Johnson Health Care Systems and Novo Nordisk Pharmaceuticals. Ms. Morley graduated from Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in corporate health.

Kim is a supporter of the sewer project and believes that the sustainability of Higgins Lake is critical to our county. She sees the main role of county commissioner as managing the budget of the county. As such, she believes that developing a sustainable budget along with a realistic five-year plan, including action items, is a necessary goal.

The second republican candidate for the District 2 County Commissioner position is **Tim O'Rourke**. Tim has extensive experience in the private sector and was the Roscommon County Road Commission manager for 14 years. Mr. O'Rourke believes that the county has financial challenges and has some ideas about how to address them. Tim believes there should be a focus on bringing new business to the area and developing new housing opportunities. Tim feels that these things would continue to increase revenues while not increasing expenditures. He believes that the opportunity to revitalize the corridors of M-55, Old 76 and BL75 should be pursued. Mr. O'Rourke believes that the county should concentrate on supplying affordable services, focusing on needs, not wishes. Tim believes that a restructuring

of county employee benefits along with changes in county work rules would prove to be of financial benefit to the county. Tim is a strong supporter of the Higgins Lake dam SAD which shifts the financial responsibility of the dam maintenance, repair and replacement from the county to lakefront property owners. In his opinion, this is a sound financial policy for the county.

Tim is not a supporter of the current Higgins Lake sewer project as he is skeptical of the scientific justification. He also feels that the scope may be overextended as he believes the location of the connected area should be between 300 and 1,000 feet from the shoreline.

The HLPAC believes that Kim Morley would be the best pick in this race. Kim's commitment to the Roscommon area has been impressive and her private sector background is extensive. Her variety of business exposure promises to bring an abundance of new approaches to county government, exactly what the county needs to find new avenues to move forward.