

KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE NOV. 3, 2009 CITY COMMISSION ELECTION

Name: Bobby J. Hopewell

Office you are seeking: Kalamazoo City Commissioner

Your top 3 priorities (maximum of one concise sentence per priority):

1. Working to create more jobs and supporting the education of our youth.
 2. Improving our neighborhoods and infrastructure such as roads.
 3. Enhancing our public safety department and keeping our citizens safe.
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Biographical information:

Date of birth: April 2, 1964

Address: 525 Stuart Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Email address: BobbyHopewell@aol.com

Web site: www.BobbyHopewell.com

Current employer: Borgess Medical Center

Spouse's name: Not married

Children's names (and ages): None

To what civic and religious organizations do you belong? Douglas Community Association Board Member, Pretty Lake Vacation Camp, Board Member, Kalamazoo Communities in Schools, Board Member, Eastside Community and Youth Center, Board Member, Member Church of Christ.

What companies do you own or hold a greater than 5 percent stake in?

Gull Road Wine & Spirit, LLC (12%)

On what corporate boards do you or have you served? **None**

Have you ever been laid off from a job? **NO**

Have you ever been fired from a job? **NO**

Have you ever been arrested? **NO**

Have you ever been convicted of, pleaded no contest to, or placed in a diversion program for a crime, other than parking or minor traffic offenses? **NO**

Have you ever been the subject of a restraining order? **NO**

Have you ever been a party to a lawsuit? **NO**

Have you ever been penalized, fined or cited by the IRS, or failed to pay local or state taxes on time? **NO**

1. The city is going through challenging times due to declining tax revenues resulting from reduced property values and a state in financial crisis. In light of this, the number-one priority of the next city commission will be to make sure that essential city services are maintained even in light of necessary budget cuts. At the same time we are addressing these challenges, however, we cannot stop planning for the future. We need to continue working with our partners to stabilize our housing base and create job opportunities for our citizens.

2. All city departments and services are being reviewed for cost reductions and savings. While we will preserve essential services such as public safety and road repairs, even these services will likely experience some budget cuts over the next year. One budget category that is likely to see significant cuts or elimination is the City Commission Initiative Fund. Currently, this fund supports community non-profit organizations and programs. The choices we will make as elected officials are similar to the choices being faced by many Kalamazoo families right now to make ends meet. The City Commission will do what is necessary to deal with this financial challenge.

3. Everyone has the right to be free from discrimination in all aspects of life. This ordinance prohibits discriminatory practices on the basis of, among other things, an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity in the provision of housing, public accommodations, and employment. To the extent that we as a community permit such discrimination to continue, we are all harmed.

4. I support the Kalamazoo County Commission placing the 1% meal and drink tax on a county-wide ballot so the citizens of the county can decide this issue. However, in light of our looming budget challenges, \$4.5 million of city tax dollars for this project is not available and would be difficult to identify. We continue to see decreases in state shared revenue and reduced property tax revenues to fund even basic services. In fact there has been no request of the city for funding an arena development. A project for the proposed site that contributes to jobs, development of downtown, and connections to WMU or Kalamazoo College is an exciting prospect.

5. We have seen great improvements in our Public Safety Department under the leadership of Chief Hadley. He has implemented new training standards, improved outreach to community members and neighborhoods, and focused on developing relationships and partnerships with individuals and organizations throughout the community. In addition, Chief Hadley has also coordinated the efforts of other city departments with public safety to improve crime prevention. Chief Hadley is representing us well and I give him high marks on his work thus far and encourage him to keep working hard for all of us.

6. I believe Chief Hadley's actual position was that the Department of Public Safety does not have jurisdiction on immigration enforcement. I agree with that position, as I believe the issue of immigration is reserved to the federal government under our U.S. Constitution. The resources of Kalamazoo Public Safety are stretched thin already, and they should not be further stretched to perform what amounts to an exclusive federal responsibility.

7. The use and distribution of marijuana is illegal under state and federal law. If the penalties for violating such laws are to be changed, they should be amended at the state and federal level, where a thorough public debate on this issue should occur. This would be consistent with the recent change by the citizens of Michigan relating to medical Marijuana. Patchwork changes in drug enforcement policies at the local level are likely to cause significant challenges. For example, because drug enforcement efforts in our city and county are conducted across jurisdictional borders, inconsistent approaches throughout the county would lead to inconsistent justice outcomes in one community versus the other. Any changes to drug enforcement laws and policies should start at the state level, after a thorough debate, so that all such laws are enforced in a uniform manner in all local communities.

8. The inability of ex-offenders to obtain employment because of their criminal record is a real problem for many individuals. Although it has been said by some that ex-offenders need to sleep in the bed they made, this view is inconsistent with the idea that once ex-offenders serve their time, we need to rehabilitate them back into society. Failure to do so only increases the odds that these individuals will reoffend since they have little hope of becoming gainfully employed. Although I do not support mandatory policies on this issue for tax abatements, I do

believe that the City, as an employer, needs to lead by example and encourage local businesses to be part of the solution to this real problem.

9. I support the millage request for Metro Transit. Public transportation supports jobs, education, health care and quality of life. By passing this millage proposal, voters will pay a combined 1.0 mills for city and county millage support of public transportation, which equals what we have historically paid, yet less than the 1.38 mills paid as recently as 2007. Please vote Yes!

10. All the investments we make in the downtown area mean nothing unless we have thriving neighborhoods. That is why we need to continue to invest in both the downtown and our neighborhoods. The downtown has a specific taxing structure that allows tax revenues generated downtown to be reinvested downtown, thereby addressing the needs within its boundaries. The city will continue to make significant investments in our neighborhoods, through road repairs and upgrades, support of affordable housing initiatives, funding of neighborhood associations, and other investments. We will continue to work to balance the needs of the community with the dollars we have available.