

Citizens for a Fair Ferndale (fairferndale.org) seeks to help Ferndale voters get acquainted with those running for public office. To this end, we asked all Candidates for library board to complete this CFF Candidate Questionnaire. CFF thanks our candidates for responding to this questionnaire and for their willingness to lead.

Ferndale Area District Library Board Candidates November 2022 Election

Kevin Yezbick

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Why did you decide to run for the library board?

I believe libraries are integral anchor institutions that strengthen communities through the services they provide and the fostering of a welcoming third place for people to gather and exchange ideas. That place extends beyond the library walls, however, through outreach into the schools, senior living, and events where we can empower those who aren't in our physical building. I also believe that Libraries aid in informing the electorate and dissuade the spread of misinformation. They are central pillars in the great experiment of Democracy - providing equal access to information as well as to the experiences and wisdom gained in other cultures. Libraries are in the business of providing access to a variety of ideas, supporting intellectual freedom, not censoring or restricting ideas and the free flow of information. Volunteering and committing to serve on the Library Board is one of the best ways I can think of to utilize my strengths and passions in service of my community. I will work to ensure the Library has the strongest foundation on which to build on Its mission to strengthen the community by providing access to materials and services that inform, enrich, entertain, and empower.

What strengths do you bring to the library board?

I worked at the Farmington Community Library for ten years in multiple roles before moving into my current position managing digital assets in the private sector. I have experience as an Interlibrary Loan volunteer, a Paraprofessional, a Reference Librarian, and a Young Adult Librarian. Each of those positions include several different responsibilities not limited to programming, collection development, and opportunities in professional development through committee work and membership in both the Michigan Library Association and the American Library Association. I am also a regular patron of the Ferndale Area District Library. I believe these experiences provide me with the insight needed to recognize the strengths and opportunities we have to strengthen the service we provide Ferndale. One of my key strengths is my passion for both the Library's mission and its ability to empower the citizens of Ferndale.

What do you see as the challenges and opportunities faced by the Ferndale Area District Library as it considers its future?

Community engagement is often dualistically a challenging opportunity. Outreach to drive awareness of the services we offer to the public, the schools, the local business community and others is a constant goal in order to maintain the high level of support we receive and to remain relevant in people's day to day lives. Maintaining partnerships and community engagement help to drive future opportunities for the Library. I also believe there is a growing threat to the free flow of information and resources. The licensing and monetization of information can inhibit access when physical assets are replaced with digitization and put behind a paywall that is fixed and not adjusted on a sliding scale to the community searching for those resources. I'm an advocate for collaborating on fair models of access to databases and other resources that work to benefit both parties and stem the growing tide of misinformation.

What role does the library board play in promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in our District Library? How do you see Ferndale Area District Library promoting racial equity specifically?

We must continue to strive to make the Library a welcoming place. While we provide equal access to materials for our community, we have to remember that systemic racism does not bring equal footing when entering the library. We must recognize that not every member of our community has the same level of privilege or resources prior to entering our doors. We must ensure that we do not ignore the very real digital divide by catering just to digital natives. There are all kinds of societal intersections to be considered on this question. A collection of materials and resources must match the diversity of the community it serves. As a board, we must continue to remove obstacles to participating in library engagement - be that through hiring, governing, or access. We can't workshop our way out of the very real threats to diversity, equity and inclusion but we can continue to work towards educating ourselves on how to best foster an environment that embodies all three of those ideals for all of our patrons and community members through informed actions.

Describe the Ferndale Area District Library in fifteen years. What do you see?

With the pace of technological improvements ever increasing, it is important that we keep current with developments so that we can continue to provide the services our community desires. As alluded to in the previous response to opportunities and challenges - this requires us to ensure that materials and resources are allocated to our community in a way that is equitable and not slanting too heavily on either side of a scale. We can't foster a collection that looks to hold just physical or just digital resources, or programming that has too many barriers to entry. I hope that in fifteen years one way these technological improvements will manifest themselves will be through increased efficiencies and accessibility in the information pipeline. I imagine this pipeline will empower our community to avoid the spread of misinformation through education and delight with a greater availability to a greater number. I do not see the library simply as a content warehouse. Libraries today are branching out in new ways to support their local communities. Top of mind for me at the Ferndale Area District Library are our Seed Library and our Library of Things. These collections assist our users in becoming creators through their utilization - just one way the library becomes a place of support for content creation. I, personally, will soon be planting the daffodil bulbs I received

at the Library through a partnership with the Ferndale Area Garden Club. I'm certain the Ferndale Area District Library will continue to explore expanding our services as responsible and reasonable leaders of innovation in the library world. As an example of more recent challenges that have arisen with the pace of developing technology - the field of Artificial Intelligence is undergoing rapid change. One example is the emergence of text to art generators like OpenAI's Dall-E 2, Meta's Make-a-Video, and Google's Imagen. These innovations have quickly raised concerns over ethics, artistic merit and copyright infringement. It isn't difficult to imagine some semblance of these tools being used not for monetary gain - but to enrich the lives of their users. It is a little more difficult to narrow the range of possibilities within that space that could be harnessed by the Library to benefit the community. Lastly, a little closer to current day - we will continue to look for ways to be more visible in the community - perhaps with some innovative developments in the Library's beloved courtyard so that we quite literally move outside the walls and engage. Thank you for your consideration.

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