

Candidates for Brockport Village Mayor

Vote for one, four year term. Polls open at the Village Offices, Tuesday, June 21 from noon to 9 p.m.

Westside News Inc. asked candidates to respond in writing (100 word limit) to the questions listed below.

Brief biographical information -
- name, age, address, length of time as village resident, education, employment, community service activities, other elected offices, family.

Regarding the allocation of resources within departments -
- do you believe some departments need more staff while others need less? Which ones and why? If not, do you believe there are other cost issues within village government which need to be addressed? What, why?

Taxes and services: How would you work to keep taxes in check without cutting services to residents? Are there services currently not offered which you think the village could afford to offer residents or which could be funded by means other than direct taxation?

What other issues do you feel village leaders and residents are faced with? How would you address them? What is your vision for Brockport's future?

What is your position on the proposed amendments to the rental housing codes?

What qualifications do you bring to the village post for which you are running?

My name is Glenn Emerson. I am 38 years old. We settled in the area when we were married, in December 1988, and moved into the village in 1991. We have lived at 89 Holley Street for the past six years. I returned to college as an adult student, graduating from SUNY Brockport in 1993 with a bachelor of arts, *summa cum laude*, in international studies. I have a minor in art history and concentrations in history, economics and film and video. My volunteer service includes five years in SPARTAC and nearly a decade coordinating and coaching girls' softball.



I'm Norman Knapp, 56, and reside at 72 South Avenue. A lifelong Brockport resident. I graduated from Brockport Central School and Monroe Community College. Retired from Kodak in 2003 after 32 years as a Lieutenant in the Fire and Emergency Services Department. 38 year member of the Brockport Fire Department serving as Fire Chief 1981-83. Served on the village Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Trustees Western Monroe Historical Society, member of numerous fire service organizations. My wife of 33 years, Mary Ann, and I are parents of two children Kory (Scott) Hunsinger and Kyle (Jaime) Knapp; one grandson, Gage Knapp.



Josephine Matela, incumbent, age 58, reside at 76 Adams Street for 21 years, in the community since 1965. Attended SUNY Brockport, retired from a 16 year career with Philip Morris, USA as an Executive Sales Manager. Married to Joseph A. Matela, Real Estate Broker, associated with Nothnagle Realtors for over 25 years. I also have two grown sons and two step-children. Currently president of the Greater Brockport Development Corporation, founding member of the Brockport Community Museum, member of the Brockport Rotary Club, Western Monroe Historical Society, Brockport Merchants Association. Owner of Tea for Two Antiques and the Red Bird Tea Shoppe since 2001.



My name is Morton Wexler. I am 70 years young. I have lived on Oxford Street with my wife, Diana, for 45 years. We have three adult children and six grandchildren. I came to the Village of Brockport in January 1953. Upon graduating from SUNY Brockport in June 1956 I was employed by the Brockport Central School District as a junior high mathematics teacher. From 1972 to 1984, I served as president of the Brockport Teachers' Association. I am a member of the Western Monroe Historical Society. Since 1983, I have served as president of the Genesee Valley Track and Field Officials Organization.



The record of the last seven years shows the police department is understaffed. When all the force is healthy, as now, the overtime can be kept down, though it will increase again in September and October, due to increased service demand. However, if an officer should become sick or injured, overtime spending will shoot back up. The DPW definitely needs clerical help, and at least a foreman to backfill Harry Donohue's position. We need to see what work is required by the master plan being developed before we can determine what additional labor positions and other resources are required.

Both the DPW and police departments are working with personnel numbers below that of a few years ago. I would utilize part time personnel where possible in both departments to bolster their workforce. I believe other cost issues need to be addressed such as legal expenses. Settling pending legal matters and utilizing a comprehensive legal firm should eliminate excessive expenses in this area.

Each department is charged with managing their people, time and money. Head count is important in determining how effective each department performs and accordingly should be adjusted as demands deem necessary. We need to address healthcare cost issues, retirement costs, Workman's Compensation and liability insurance costs. These are fixed costs that drive the cost of doing business. We need to continue to find ways to save, such as we did by joining the Monroe County Workman's Compensation Pool that saved us \$40,000 this year.

The staffing of all village departments should be evaluated annually. It is imperative that the board meets regularly with its various department leaders in order to establish the needs of each department. With the board adopting a plan to improve the infrastructure in our village, we must make certain that the Department of Public Works has the needed personnel for the various projects. What transpired on Carolin Drive and Erie Street should never occur again. I do favor maintaining a local Brockport Police Department. It's the cost we must reduce. The board must also scrutinize the expenditure on legal matters. The effectiveness of our assisting personnel should be evaluated periodically.

To maintain services to village residents without increasing taxes, I will work to reduce overtime costs and utilize part time personnel where possible and in accordance with the current contacts. I will also explore shared services of similar departments with other governmental agencies. The use of service fees should be explored for services not currently provided to residents that might be funded by means other than direct taxation.

We have been doing this already. Our Ambulance Third Party Billing gives the community 24/7 service at no cost to the taxpayers. Joining Monroe County 911 and maintaining our local dispatch, changing our economic development position to a contract position saved taxpayer dollars. Again, going to the County of Monroe Workman's Compensation saved \$40,000. We are looking into bidding out contract refuse collection to realize future cost savings for village residents. Our efforts in securing local, state and federal funds have been very successful. Over \$1.3 million to date during this administration and these grants, not all matching, help to keep costs down. Also, our volunteers in the fire department, ambulance corps and other community volunteer groups contribute to the bottom line in giving countless unpaid hours that we sometimes may take for granted. We will continue our efforts to stimulate growth in residential and commercial development thereby broadening the tax base and increasing revenue.

The Brockport Water Commission is an annual \$12,000 dinosaur. It should become extinct. The minimum staffing provision became a part of the police contract a decade ago. It has cost village taxpayers in excess of \$1,000,000 during that time span. It must be changed. The amount of money our village spends on legal fees is exorbitant. The present process is flawed. The mayor uses an attorney to satisfy any of her whims. Her unilateral decisions have cost taxpayers an excessive amount of money.

The biggest issue facing the village is the lack of professionalism and integrity in our leadership. Endless bickering and controversy embarrass Brockport in the press. Trustees routinely hold secret meetings. All departments complain of micro management. Harassment of village employees has included: disclosing unlisted home phone numbers, verbal assaults in the workplace and eavesdropping on phone conversations. No one has the right to treat people this way. The solution is simple: treat employees and citizens with professional courtesy and human dignity, keep meetings open to the public and conduct them in orderly fashion.

The Village of Brockport is not unlike any other municipality and faces issues of unfunded mandates by the State of New York and the federal government. In addition, health insurance and retirement benefits continue to rise. A constant review of these expenses is necessary to determine if similar benefits are available from alternate providers at less cost. My vision of Brockport's future is that of a vibrant community. I will strive to put Brockport in the news in a positive way.

Consolidation is on the minds of some people. If it was a cost saver I would be in favor. However, studies have shown that it is not. You still have to do the same work and you still need the people to do it. We already collaborate with Clarkson, Sweden, SUNY Brockport, the Brockport Central School District, Hilton, Spencerport and Ogden on equipment and manpower on countless projects. We are always looking for ways to increase our collaboration with our municipal neighbors. My vision for the future is to continue to drive our economy through sound development and marketing and to capitalize on our sustainable competitive advantages: our waterfront, our historic commercial district and SUNY Brockport. We will continue to collaborate with all stakeholders.

(A). It is extremely important that an open dialogue between residential homeowners, rental business property owners and village leaders take place as soon as possible. The "us" versus "them" mentality has divided our village. I would also hope college officials take a more active role in certificate of occupancy compliance. The village board and town officials should look at additional cost sharing issues. We presently share the cost of the fire/ambulance corps, the library and the cost of the sewer truck. (B). My vision for our community is to do my utmost to make village government more affordable. We cannot continually place the burden of village government on the purse strings of the village taxpayers. Finally, working together with all factions in our community will be one of my primary concerns.

There have been many lies spread about the proposed code changes. First, no one is trying to drive students out of the village. Second, rooming houses for legitimate fraternities and group homes would still be allowed, by special permit. Third, existing boarding houses have several years to convert to apartments, so they won't be "boarded up." There is no absolute right to do whatever one wants with one's property. We have no more right to dump pollutants or raise pigs and chickens than to pack family homes to the rafters with warm bodies. Neighbors and tenants have rights too.

I am not in favor of adopting the proposed amendments to the rental housing code. Current codes must be enforced.

My position has always been that we need to do whatever it takes to improve the health, safety and welfare of the community. That means student housing as well as other housing. I look forward to the report from the code committee studying the implications of the proposed code amendments.

I oppose the amortization amendment to the housing code. I know it will be another costly six figure legal expense. It is also questionable how enforceable the code will be. If we enforce the three unrelated provision as it appears in our own existing code there is no need for the amortization amendment. In 2001, the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court stated the following regarding our three unrelated code; "The village code was not illegal, discriminatory, void or unenforceable." Our present litigation case has lasted eight years and cost village taxpayers approximately a quarter of a million dollars. What will be our monetary settlement on that case?

I was raised on a dairy farm in the Mohawk Valley. For the past 10 years, I have worked in technical communications. My career track involves designing and managing technical development projects, such as web-based training systems, multimedia and product documentation. Just this year, I was awarded my first patent for a graphical user interface design. Most significantly, while I'm far from perfect, my faith in Christ has taught me humility, courage and a strong sense of right and wrong. I have tried to base my life on the motto: "he who would lead, let him serve."

I believe the past 16 years of serving as a trustee has given me valuable experience in the administration of the village. I feel my personality will be beneficial in resolving issues and doing what's best for the Village of Brockport. I believe I have the leadership skills to work with the other members of the village board in the best interest of the citizens of Brockport. Together we must all strive to work in harmony to make Brockport a wonderful place to live and grow.

Lee Iacocca said, "There are people who watch things happen, people who make things happen, and people who say, what happened?" I have the knowledge, skills, drive and desire, along with four years of invaluable experience as your mayor. With your help, I will continue to make good things happen.

I bring more than 30 years of experience in working with people in my various leadership positions. The people who have worked with me in my leadership role will attest to the fact that I bring honesty, truth, commitment to serve and willingness to listen to their concerns. Also, I am the only mayoral candidate who knows, understands and has been trained in negotiation with public employees. My agenda contains one goal, at the end of my four year term: I would hope village residents and our community are better off than they were at the start of my mayoral position. With your help, it will happen.