

Q & A with the Candidates for Spencerport Village Trustee

Vote for two Tuesday, March 20, Spencerport United Methodist Church, 32 Amity Street, noon to 9 p.m.

Charles R. Hopson, 61, 132 Maplewood Avenue. Education: Churchville-Chili HS graduate, R.B.I. - Accounting, R.I.T. - Industrial Management Diploma, U.S. Navy Reserve. Employment: 1975-2007 Hopson Automotive, 1970-1975 Wise & Phillips Chrysler Plymouth, Spencerport, 1965-1970 Eastman Kodak Company - Accounting. Village of Spencerport resident for over 38 years.



Carol J. Nellis-Ewell, 60. Running on Victory Party line. Education -- Eastridge High School, University of Buffalo. Employment -- Local business owner since 1998: Afrikamba, Curios...Cultural Tours & Travel, South Union Street, Spencer's Landing, Spencerport; Eastman Kodak Company (retired 2001); Diverse 35-year career as buyer/planner, purchasing, customer service representative, quality inspector/production worker. Community organizations -- Village of Spencerport Planning Board -- co-chair & member 10 + years; Spencerport Area Chamber of Commerce Board -- Public Relations Chair; Website content preparation and interaction with webmaster; Assemblyman William Reilich's Women's Executive Advisory Council -- 3 years; Kiwanis Club of Spencerport -- First Lady, 2003-2005; Friends of the Ogden Farmers' Library -- member, coordinator of Kiwanis/Library Greeting Card Recycling Project; Spencerport Economic Development Committee (SEDC) -- Beautification Committee; originator Buy-a-Brick program for Clyde Carter Memorial Gazebo. Village resident/homeowner 22 years.



Steven Russell, 49, 15 Bauer's Cove, married to Terry; children: Matthew, Christopher, Jonathan, and Kelly. Education: Bachelor of Science Operations Research & Industrial Engineering, Syracuse University, 1980, Master of Engineering Management Engineering, RIT, 1990, Advanced Management Program, RIT, 1997; Master of Science Health Administration (in progress), Roberts Wesleyan College. Employment: Eastman Kodak Company, Research and Innovation, Health Group. Length of Residency: 22 years. Previous elected/appointed positions: Village of Spencerport Zoning Board Member, Village Trustee, 1999 -- 2007.



Economic development -- what part does village government play in building a vibrant business community within the municipality? What plan of action would you pursue to work toward filling vacant business and commercial properties within the village? What types of businesses would you suggest to bring customers to the village?

Events like Canal Days, Music at the Gazebo and Christmas by the Canal, bring our community together and welcome visitors to Spencerport. I'd like to see these continue and be built upon in the future. I hope to work with the board to improve the downtown shopping area. It is vital to every community to have a viable business area which includes a grocery store and other businesses to fill the community's basic needs. In order for these businesses to survive, we, the residents need to patronize the local shops or risk losing them again. I would like to see the board support current property owners in their search for new tenants, and will work tirelessly to find a replacement grocery store.

Village officials and boards have a responsibility to play a leadership role, and communicate their activities and efforts. A village trustee should be assigned to economic development. My plan of action would be to champion meaningful economic development -- engage in dialogue and idea exchanges with other communities and organizations; be accessible; listen to input from successful businesses; follow "smart growth" plan of New York State and Common Good Planning Center. Types of businesses: During my conversations with people in our community, their message is clear and evident; we need an updated, viable neighborhood grocery store that provides fresh basics. This is important to everyone, especially our seniors and boaters/tourists. We need to try to replace Ben Franklin and the hardware store with some kind of affordable, multi-purpose store that will encourage "passers-through" to stop and shop.

Board members serve as leaders of the community working closely with stakeholders to define a plan based on the collective vision and the values of the community that will meet the needs of the business community. They must address issues and trends of the local economic and community health including quality of the infrastructure and services and capacity of local utilities. Plan of action: The Southside Waterfront Redevelopment plan recommends several initiatives to revitalize the business district. It encourages the creation of a merchants association that engages stakeholders in the discussion regarding business attraction, expansion, and retention in the village. I also support working with the Empire State Development where businesses can benefit from the various assistance programs. Types of business: I suggest locally owned businesses and specialty retailers that are family friendly and create a thriving social atmosphere. Several residents have suggested the need for a quality-focused grocery store that targets the value conscious family shopper.

List and define (with your plan of action if you have one) your priorities on the following village topics: (total of 300 words).

1. Infrastructure
 2. Beautification
 3. Communication
 4. Community involvement -- how can residents play a part?
 5. Planning and development
 6. Budget/fiscal planning
 7. Any other specific topic you feel needs attention
- (Prioritized by candidates in their responses).**

Infrastructure - maintain and update the village infrastructure using preventive repairs within the current budget. Communication - more information is needed about all board decisions, with perhaps a monthly letter or column from the mayor in Westside News. This community needs better communication from and with the Board of Trustees. Community involvement - residents can attend the board meetings, ask questions, and voice their opinions. Planning & Development - commercial development of the canal side could enhance the village. Budget/fiscal planning - I would try to keep expenses down with cost effective decisions and review and modify equipment expenditures.

Budget/fiscal planning -- Understand the assessment process for the Village of Spencerport and Town of Ogden. Can we use a common database with standardized values, rates and caps for real property tax exemptions including those for people with disabilities, seniors, and veterans? Act as liaison with Town of Ogden Senior Center located in the Village of Spencerport central business district -- Join Advisory Board -- Live the theme: "Seniors are Important." Communication -- post Code of Ethics in village meeting room and public areas. Submit articles to Suburban News; suggest series/interviews "What Do Your Boards and Officials Do?" Community involvement -- how can residents play a part? It's easy. Join, participate and volunteer -- that's what I did. Use the local businesses and services that are here today. Place a Suggestion Box in the village office; create and publicize an annual "Meet the Boards" reception. Also -- enhance and protect our environment -- focus on the Erie Canal waterway and trailway corridors, investigate alternative energy, especially wind power and turbines. Are we code-friendly? Is it easy to be green? Support the comprehensive plans of the village and town and the Town of Ogden Open Space Plan. Beautification -- We live in a naturally beautiful area of Western New York state, with unique attributes. As caretakers, we must maintain and preserve it for future generations. Led by the Village, our Spencerport Area Chamber of Commerce, Canal Days Committee, Garden Club, youth organizations and service clubs contribute to this effort. Suggest the design of a memorial project plan in the canal environs, including a "Memory Lane" near the Trolley Depot Museum, where plantings of flowers, shrubs and trees could be purchased to honor loved ones. Infrastructure -- I would like to see development of phased plans for expensive, extensive projects that significantly impact taxpayers and tax rates. Example: East Avenue extension. Planning and development -- We are fortunate to have capable, dedicated boards that adhere to codes, laws and rules, and consult with agencies and experts to make decisions in the best interest of everyone.

Infrastructure: The first priority initiative is the comprehensive high-way maintenance and upgrade program to provide safe, quality streets. Alternative investment scenarios were evaluated to determine the best economical approach. The second priority initiative is the sewer decommissioning, inflow and infiltration projects to refurbish aging pipes, take the processing plant off line, and build a force main to Monroe County Pure Waters System. The third priority initiative is investment in the Electric Franchise infrastructure to avoid power outages and maintain low cost electric rates for customers. Beautification: The village board must ensure the harmony and compatibility of buildings and attractive landscapes reinforcing the village's history and canal town character. Local business will benefit from increased foot traffic from residents, visitors, and boaters. Communication: The village website, board minutes, community information sessions, and Suburban News are good sources of information. However, the village board should introduce periodic community surveys to identify areas for improving services and future community needs. Community Involvement: It is important to give everyone the chance to play an active part in our community. The board should continue to encourage volunteerism and participation in events like Day of Caring, seasonal festivals, emergency preparedness, and board meetings. Planning and development: The key to achieving long-term goals and overcoming obstacles to community development is good planning and stakeholder participation. The board should continue to seek input from stakeholders and incorporate their suggestions during planning sessions. Budget/fiscal planning: The board and department heads must continue to work as a team to establish a budget that aligns with community needs and expectations. Focus on reducing costs, eliminating waste, and meeting budget commitments is important for the financial health of the village. The board must also pursue alternative sources of funding including grants and future inter-municipal cooperative agreements to lower costs.

How would you characterize the relationship Spencerport village government has with the Town of Ogden? Are there initiatives which both governments could pursue jointly which would benefit both village and town residents?

I believe the Village and the Town of Ogden should work together to strengthen their relationship and discuss ways that they can work together for the benefit of village and town residents. They currently share building departments which benefits both municipalities, and I would encourage them to continue that relationship.

The village and town have a working relationship. Already they share the services of the assessor, building inspector and Ogden Conservation Board. They can further partner to invite attractive light industrial and commercial enterprises to re/locate in appropriate areas; these good neighbors use minimal services and can help offset the tax base.

The current relationship has been focused on improving government efficiency, lowering infrastructure costs, and working collaboratively on several joint community projects. Several projects required an enormous amount of planning and coordination. Examples include: (1)The implementation of the Geographical Information System used by Public Works and Emergency Services. (2)The preparation of the Emergency Preparedness plan that provides useful information on specific hazards including what to do before, during, and after each hazard type. (3)The implementation of the sanitary force main and pump station. Initiatives to pursue -- initiatives that would benefit our business owners, residents, and other stakeholders include: Pursue grants for improving drainage and flood mitigation; discuss strategies to improve services for our seniors; implement the inter-municipal agreement to lower costs.

Why are you seeking the office of Spencerport Village Trustee? What experience do you bring to the position? What else do you want voters to know about you?

The opportunity to be involved with decision making and to add the knowledge from being in business for 32 years in the area has led me to run for this office. I have had one-on-one relationships with the public for 37 years and feel comfortable that I can relate to the community's needs. I know how to deal with decisions on capital expenses and how to time them to receive the best return on cost. I hope to bring my experience to the Spencerport Village Board of Trustees and do my best for the community.

I am proud to live in Spencerport. It would be an honor and privilege to serve as an elected official. I am optimistic about what we can do together -- to make things even better. With over 10 years on the Village Planning Board and community organizations, I have established good relationships with officials and members. This makes for effective, enjoyable teamwork. Other info: I am married to Harry Palmer Ewell, my partner in everything African, including conservation and humanitarian "For Africa's Sake" projects in Kenya and South Africa. Our purpose is "to leave kind footprints on earth." Our family includes son Paul Nellis, his wife Michelle, and grandchildren, Cody, Marissa and Sean, of Ontario, NY, and a great dog Khufu. I chose the Victory Party to honor our niece, Pfc. Katie L. Christof, US Army medic, serving at Camp Victory, near Baghdad, Iraq.

I am focused on improving the quality of life, and making Spencerport a special place to live and conduct business. I have served on both the zoning and village board. I have over ten years experience in leading community projects and have gained extensive knowledge in village operations. I have enjoyed leading and working with other community stakeholders on several projects including the Towpath Park and Lester C. Merz Memorial, Union Street lighting, transfer of the village water system, and several other infrastructure initiatives. I am currently the chairman of the finance, and facilities/electric franchise committees. Working with the board we have made significant progress in improving village services, improving operational efficiencies, ensuring cost effective infrastructure, and increasing customer satisfaction while maintaining very competitive rates.