

Sweden Election: Candidates for supervisor and town council

Nat O. Lester, III
Sweden Supervisor



Office sought: Sweden Supervisor. Republican, Conservative, Independence endorsements. Length of term - 2 years.

Pertinent information: Nat O. Lester, III, 20 Timber Trail, Brockport, age 47. Education: JD Thomas Cooley Law School, Real estate attorney in private practice - third generation law firm in Brockport. Family: wife, Karen Lenden Lester, reading teacher at the Ginther School; children: Katie, senior at SUNY Cortland, Matthew, Junior at Brockport High School, Megan, eighth grader at Brockport Middle School. Previously held office: Sweden Town Justice - seven years; serving as town supervisor last 10 years. Community Service: Director and Treasurer Sweden Community Foundation, Director, Monroe County Workers Comp Plan. Former member Lakeside Health Foundation, Former BCS Joint Recreation Chairman, Former Youth Basketball Coach, Member Nativity BVM.

Two issues of primary importance:
Keeping a low town tax rate is key to both our residential and commercial property owners. Our 2008 budget features a flat tax rate; which follows a two percent tax rate reduction in 2007. Comparing Sweden's tax rate to other towns is misleading. The Town of Sweden has the highest percentage of wholly exempt properties in all of Monroe County. Nearly half of our assessed value is exempt from paying property tax, If our percentage of wholly exempt properties was the same as Clarkson, Parma and Ogden, our tax rate would drop to \$.25 per thousand. We truly do more with less.
Traffic is a concern particularly along NYS Routes 19 and 31. While the town has no jurisdiction over those state highways, we have done what we can to mitigate traffic problems. We worked cooperatively with the Village of Brockport to extend South Avenue to Owens Road. We lobbied for improvements to the intersection of Owens Road and Route 31 and the intersection of East Avenue and Sweden Walker Road. In the next few weeks, work on a connection between Talamora Trail and Nathaniel Poole Trail will begin. This connection will provide Talamora Trail residents with traffic light controlled access to Route 31.

Reason for seeking election:
I believe the Town of Sweden is entering a period of growth and change. I want to be part of the team that guides those changes in a way that brings the greatest benefit to our residents. We will soon be reconvening our Comprehensive Plan Committee to address the changes that have occurred during the past two years and to plan for the future. With growth comes the opportunity to address pre-existing quality of life issues and the opportunity to engage developers in sharing in the enhancement of our public facilities (ie, our infrastructure, senior center, library, community center and park).

What I wish you had asked:
What are the current Sweden Town Board's most significant accomplishments?
The current Sweden Town Board has extended public water to more properties than at any other time in the Town's nearly 200-year history. We continue to look for creative ways to bring public water to rural areas. While other communities are floating multi-million dollar bonds to finance community centers, the current Town Board negotiated the donation of a \$3 million turn-key facility to the Town. After lengthy negotiations, we also secured 156 acres of park land from New York State for the sum of one dollar. We continue to offer services that most other towns have eliminated or never even offered - a 5-day a week senior nutrition program, a recycling center, spring and fall trash/brush pick-ups, rabies clinics and more.

Patricia P. Connors
Sweden Town Council



Office sought: Sweden Town Council member. Endorsed by Republican, Conservative, Independence parties. 4-year term

Pertinent information: Patricia P. Connors, 1 Country View Terrace, Brockport, 51. Education: A.A.S. Degree from Monroe Community College. Employed with the New York State Department of Health (30 years). Husband: Robert, retired Monroe County Sheriff Investigator; two children. Served 8 years as town councilperson. Volunteer/Community Service: Volunteer teaching beginner's ballroom dance at the Sweden/Clarkson Community Center. 2007 Adult Community Service Award recipient;

Two issues of primary importance:
Providing services at an affordable cost. The Town of Sweden provides many services that other towns do not: a 5-day a week senior nutrition program, a full-time recreation department, a recycling center, trash and brush pick ups and operational cemeteries. We do this and yet maintain a very low tax rate compared to other towns that do not offer these services. How do we do this? By scrutinizing every aspect of the town budget every year and insisting upon change when change will benefit the taxpayer. During my years on the Board, we have never cut services, but we have changed the way services are delivered to make them more affordable.
Vacant store fronts and economic development. The question is, "Is this the sole responsibility of local government?" In my opinion, no, it is not. This is a community issue. Local government can help facilitate, but the community needs to take charge. Economic development and empty storefronts are a concern of this board; however, they are concerns that need to be addressed with the community working together to "market" our area.

Why am I seeking re-election?
I am seeking a third term on the Sweden Town Board because I enjoy the opportunity to help the community move in a positive direction during a time of rapid change. I am committed to a strong fiscal policy which recognizes the importance of caring for the town's public facilities and maintaining services at current levels while keeping the tax rate at a level that is below that of other towns with similar services. I am currently involved with the county's Civil Preparedness Initiative and co-chair a planning committee comprised of individuals from the Towns of Sweden and Clarkson, the Village of Brockport, the Brockport Fire and Police Departments, the Brockport Central School District, SUNY Brockport and several local service and faith community organizations.

What I wish you had asked
What message would you like to give to voters?
Taking a quote from Denis Waitley, "There are two primary choices in life; to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them." Working together as a team, rather than independently, accomplishes so much more. Our "team" shares a similar goal – investing in the future of our community. In reviewing the past 8 years, we boldly took a part-time summer recreation program to a full-time recreation program for all age groups. ... We were given an opportunity to have a completely renovated building gifted to the town for use as a community center. We successfully finished negotiations started with our former town supervisor, the late John Henion, in securing 156 acres of land from New York State to develop as a town park. We developed successful partnerships with the Town of Clarkson, a Brockport High School engineering class for the development of the skate park and the design and build-out of the sign for the park.

Jeff Davignon
Sweden Town Council



Office sought: I am running for the Sweden Town Board. Endorsed by both the Democratic and Working Families Parties. Also formed my own political party, the independent Pro-Citizen party, to give independent voters an independent choice in this year's election.

Pertinent information: Jeff Davignon, Brockport village resident. 37 years old. Wife, Amy; 4 children. Earned a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Buffalo and a master's degree in communication from Canisius College. Professional background involves sales and contract management. Serve as a member of the Seymour Library Board of Trustees and the Village of Brockport Code Review Committee. Coach for the Sweden/Clarkson Recreation sports programs and also coached son Charlie in the Special Olympics. Teaches Sunday school and volunteer in the children's liturgy program as an active member of Nativity Church in Brockport.

Issues of primary importance in Sweden
With over one million square feet of vacant commercial property, our major challenge is revitalizing empty storefronts. New development is important, but it should strengthen and not weaken, the character of our community. We can trade orchards for asphalt, but once they're gone we will never get them back. A new and more ambitious agenda for responsible economic development is needed.
Intercommunity cooperation is at an all-time low when the need for it is at an all-time high. I will work toward a more cooperative relationship between the Village of Brockport, SUNY Brockport and the Town of Sweden. Together we can expand our economic opportunities, lower operating costs, and avoid duplication of services.

Why are you seeking election?
I am running to give residents an independent voice in town government. Our town board votes predictably—thinking as a group, and voting as a group over 95% of the time. Sweden needs a board member with some independence of thought to ask questions, dig deeper, and create a community dialogue. I approach issues responsibly and with an open mind. I make decisions based on all of the facts. Principles, not party affiliation, guide my thinking.

What I wish you had asked
Are Sweden residents better off now than they were four years ago?
I don't think so. We have more vacant commercial spaces, fewer green spaces, and remain one of the highest taxed communities in Monroe County. Thousands still lack clean, safe drinking water, Kleen Brite continues to sit contaminated without town involvement, and the Sweden3-Chapman toxic waste site, the largest illegal dump ever found in the region, remains a risk to human health. The issues are serious. The agenda of the past four years has been light. Elect me and I will use the next four years to change that.

Thomas Ferrazzi Ferris
Sweden Town Council



Office sought: Sweden Town Board. Endorsed by Republican, Conservative and Independence parties.

Pertinent information: Thomas F. Ferris, 82 Erie Street, Brockport. Graduated from Brockport Central School District 1983; B.S. magna cum laude, SUNY Brockport; Juris Doctor, University of Buffalo School of Law. Wife, Susan; three children. Served in United States Army; Airborne Infantry; served in 2nd Infantry Division, South Korea; 82nd Airborne Division, Ft. Bragg, North Carolina; 5th Infantry Division, Ft. Polk, Louisiana. Founding law partner, Connors & Ferris, LLP. Community Service: past member of the Village of Brockport Historic Preservation Board; past member of Town of Sweden Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee. Current board member for the Sweden Community Foundation.

Two issues of primary importance:
Taxes - Our current board has made keeping taxes low and services high a priority. We lowered the tax rate in 2007 and have delivered a flat tax rate in 2008. The flat tax rate has been maintained despite the fact that 47.3 percent of town's tax base is tax exempt and despite the fact that the town has assumed responsibility of maintaining and operating two historical cemeteries. There were decreases in revenue from the town court and senior center; projected increases in the cost of health insurance (approx. 12 %), energy costs, operational costs at the Seymour Library (approx. 15 %) and increased operational costs at the Sweden Senior Center.
Economic Development - The town board has worked vigorously to attract sensible commercial development which rounds out or provides services not currently available in town. This has been done in accord with the town's current master plan and, where appropriate, rezoning has been accomplished to accommodate our town's changing needs.

Reasons for seeking election:
Our town is on the cusp of positive change. Our current town board sees opportunity for Sweden residents that never existed before. Our town is financially strong and with professional management, planning and continued fiscal responsibility, there is no reason we can't continue to increase the vitality of the Town of Sweden. In this way then I wish to continue to serve the residents of Sweden.

What I wish you had asked:
Does the town work with other local municipalities to save taxpayers money?
Absolutely. Sweden has partnered with the village, the towns of Clarkson and Hamlin and other local municipalities on many projects and jobs where doing so would benefit all. Any criticism that the town doesn't do so is misleading. The town works closely with the village of Brockport and Clarkson in connection with our consolidated fire/ambulance service and in connection with the operation of the Seymour Library. The town has recently assumed the sole responsibility for performing tax assessments in the village. The shining example of inter-municipal cooperation in this town's history is the Sweden-Clarkson Community Center. There are many projects done collaboratively between our Highway department and other highway departments all in the spirit of cooperation and saving taxpayer dollars.