



Candidate Questionnaire

1) Why do you believe you are the best of the four candidates for City Council?

Amber Hess - I believe that I am the best write-in candidate running in this election for a variety of reasons. My main strengths as a candidate lie in my passion for Alpena , my hometown that I love and want to see prosper, as well as my genuine concern for all who call Alpena home. Also, I am intelligent, informed, open-minded, a reader (which I hear helps since there is a lot to read in this position), always eager to learn new things and willing to jump in, roll up my sleeves and help with whatever needs to get done. I am already active in the community as a volunteer for various organizations, support local businesses with the dollars I spend and spread love for our community to all I meet as a self-appointed Ambassador of Alpena. If elected I will strive to be accessible to residents, listen to their viewpoints, educate myself as needed to make informed decisions and work hard to best serve the citizens of Alpena. I am thankful there are two seats open on the council, since I do believe that Cindy Johnson is the most qualified candidate running due to her years of experience on the council and her demonstrated dedication to Alpena and the community in the role of Councilperson. I would be honored to be able to serve beside her on City Council.

Cal Howard – No response

Cindy Johnson - I've served on Council for the last four years and more than 20 years volunteering for the City, including 11 years on Planning Commission. My experience and dedication to the City make me an excellent choice to be re-elected to City Council.

Rick Rafferty - I have served local and state governments for almost 20 years. My experience working with City Council as a community policing officer exposed me to the workings of city government. I learned a lot of valuable lessons about building networks and compromising to help the city run smoothly and effectively and for the people.

Thomas VanDuinen - I am the best candidate because I have a life time of business experience and the City of Alpena is just a business

2) What do you think should be the City's top priorities for 2018/2019?

Amber Hess - On ongoing top priority should always be developing a balanced, effective budget. An important part of this budget is contributing to the budget stabilization fund so that the fund balance can continue to grow so it is there to provide the City with a reasonable surplus in the event of unforeseen expenses or reductions in revenues.

I think that another top priority is to continue to address the City of Alpena's infrastructure and building maintenance/equipment needs. Updating water mains and sewer systems is vital for safety, road conditions, and providing consistent and reliable water and sewer service to residents. I think that essential city service infrastructure, road and sidewalk conditions and building maintenance /equipment needs should remain an ongoing priority so that residents are provided with safe sidewalks/roads on which to travel and the reliable services they should be able to expect for their tax dollars.

Another top priority that can help set Alpena apart and foster growth is the continued development of, access to and promotion of our public spaces and community events. There are exciting things coming, a dog park, a splash park, improvements to Culligan Plaza, perhaps even a Downtown Community Center a few years down the road. Expanding, improving on and marketing our public spaces and community events is vital. By doing so, we are adding value for residents who live here and also making our community more enticing as a destination for possible new community members and travelers. Collaborating with community members as well as local businesses and organizations will be a crucial step in this priority of making Alpena an even cooler, more engaged, active city to call home and to visit.

Cal Howard – No response.

Cindy Johnson - Being fiscally responsible is always a top priority, especially considering the year-to-year uncertainty surrounding revenue sharing from the State. Additionally, the State has eliminated personal property taxes, which have not been accounted for. All told, the City has lost nearly 5 million dollars in revenue sharing since 2003. In this uncertain environment, Council has opted to keep the fund balance high.

Other top priorities are: supporting economic development and tourism, continuing to upgrade infrastructure, and maintaining a good working relationship with the County and surrounding Townships.

Rick Rafferty - The City government needs to continue to work on improving communication between the council and the people they serve. The city needs to be more transparent regarding water/sewer services and costs. Focus also needs to be put on updating Mich-e-ke-wis park. It is a great resource that has been too long neglected.

Thomas VanDuinen - Infrastructure infrastructure infrastructure

3) The main economic development organization for the area is under the umbrella of the Alpena Area Chamber of Commerce. They require many partners to create success. What do you see as the City's role/responsibilities in economic development?

Amber Hess - Economic Development is crucial to our community and growth, therefore, I think that the City of Alpena and the DDA should be integrally involved with Target Alpena and other stakeholders. Working alongside the Chamber of Commerce, the Convention & Visitors Bureau and others dedicated to developing a flourishing community just makes sense. All of us, whether representing public entities, businesses, labor unions or non-profit organizations within the region should communicate and collaborate so that there is a coordinated, area wide, economic development partnership effort.

I believe that the City of Alpena providing financial support to Target Alpena through a service agreement makes sense, since it is more cost effective than if the City had its own economic development operation similar in scope to Target Alpena. Beyond collaborating with Target Alpena and other entities, I feel that the City of Alpena should welcome and facilitate events of current businesses, business expansion and new business development within the city. Fostering a vibrant and diverse economic landscape should be an ongoing goal of the City of Alpena.

Cal Howard – No response.

Cindy Johnson - The City is flexible in attracting businesses and helping grow existing businesses through zoning and planning. The relationships between the City and Target, the Alpena Area Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Development Authority and the Convention and Visitors Bureau helps to bring economic development opportunities to the area. The City also supports Target financially and has representation on the Economic Development Board.

Rick Rafferty - The City Council's role is to act in the best interest of the citizens and business owners. We must continue to make Alpena attractive to new businesses and visitors while not negatively affecting our citizens and current business owners.

Thomas VanDuinen - The City should only provide the platform for economic development

4) Public Safety (police, fire, and drug control) was named as a top area of desired focus for our local Governments on a recent survey conducted by the Alpena Area Chamber of Commerce. What do you see as the City's role/responsibilities in public safety? How would you assure these responsibilities are achieved, should you get elected?

Amber Hess - I believe that public safety is paramount to the City of Alpena fulfilling its duty to provide a safe, healthy environment in which to live and work. Every person deserves to feel safe in their home and their community. The City of Alpena holds great responsibility and a primary role in making our city as safe as possible. In order to ensure that it is, the City should make sure that local police and fire departments have the staffing, resources and equipment they need to best do their jobs. Collaborating

with other government agencies as needed to improve public safety should always be considered and developed if it improves outcomes and helps keep our community safer.

Cal Howard – No response.

Cindy Johnson - According to the City's Charter, "Council shall provide for the public peace, and health, and for the safety of persons and property." So we are required by our Charter to support Fire/EMS and our Police Department. The City has an Intergovernmental Agreement with the County to provide/assist EMS services to the entire County. Our personnel is trained to provide the best care, outside of the hospital setting. We have a police department that is staffed 24/7 with highly trained police officers. I credit the quality of our staff and training to Chief Bill Forbush (Fire) and Chief Joel Jett (Police) and will continue to support them with funding, equipment, and personnel. The City also provides funding to HUNT and serves on their board. City Council raised the allocation to HUNT for the fiscal year 2017/2018, as we recognize the need for funding to combat current drug issues in the area.

Rick Rafferty - The men and women of our public safety departments need to know that they are supported and appreciated for the service they perform. Making sure they have the necessary equipment and training to do the best job possible must be a priority. I would like to see the police department supported and encouraged to reach out to the community through more crime prevention efforts. That will help to address the opioid crisis at its roots.

Thomas VanDuinen - This question is of many parts that are not necessarily compatible. I believe that the tax payers are not getting the value they should from the tax dollars being spent.

5) The Alpena Area Chamber of Commerce believes that fiscal responsibility and transparency should be a high priority for all Government entities. What is your opinion on the current level of fiscal responsibility and transparency at the City, and how would you propose managing these in the future, should you get elected?

Amber Hess – I feel that the City of Alpena currently exhibits a high level of fiscal responsibility and transparency. The City's budget is available to the public by request or anytime on the City of Alpena website. Municipal Council Meetings are open to the public and available for viewing on YouTube. Not to mention that the City of Alpena recently was awarded a certificate of achievement for excellence in financial reporting for the 23rd consecutive year.

The award is given by Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). This certificate is the highest form of recognition a municipality can receive for its accounting and reporting practices.

If elected, I propose we continue our current high level of stewardship of public funds and accurate, transparent reporting of how they are utilized. An important step in this will be making sure that there is

a clear, comprehensive succession plan in place to address that the current Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director and the Deputy Clerk are both retiring soon.

Cal Howard – No response.

Cindy Johnson – The City is transparent and fiscally responsible. Our budgets, council meetings, and minutes are all available on our website. Staff and Council are always available to answer any questions residents or businesses may have. We've received the highest level of recognition, a Certificate for Excellence in Financial Reporting, for our reporting and transparency 23 years in a row. I will continue to support staff who make the City transparent in every aspect.

Rick Rafferty - There is room for improvement here. Getting information out to the public via social media, newsletters and open forums help to show that the City is trying to be transparent in its workings. It is also important that the citizens take advantage of these efforts and do their part to engage the City Council.

Thomas VanDuinen - The government does not seem to have any responsibility and squanders our hard earned money with out feeling any remorse. There is no transparency and much of what goes on is hidden. I would help to make everything transparent.

6) Currently, intergovernmental cooperation in the community is attempted through the Intergovernmental Council. Some believe there is still much to be desired in this area, while others indicate the current cooperation is sufficient. What is your vision for intergovernmental relationships and participation by the City?

Amber Hess – I think that the Intergovernmental Council, along with its sub-committees on matters that affect the Alpena area in general, is valuable. Having the City of Alpena, each township and Alpena County represented at a common table where matters that affect our community can be discussed and educational material can be shared is important. City, township and county lines are constructed lines on a map. Yes, they affect taxation and zoning and other procedural matters, but ultimately all of us who live in Northeast Michigan are part of a community. And the better each of us is doing, the better it is for others and the community as a whole. My vision is to establish positive, effective intergovernmental relationships so that those of us who choose to serve our community can facilitate cooperation and positive change throughout our community.

Cal Howard – No response.

Cindy Johnson - Cooperation is instrumental to the success of the City, County, and Townships. In my opinion the City has a good working relationship with the County and Townships, though we should never stop striving for improvement in this area.

On committees I serve on for Intergovernmental Council, we look for ways to achieve common goals. The recycling program is a great example of a countywide intuitive run by a board which represents the entire County, and has had great success. Another example is the intergovernmental agreement through which the City provides a non-transporting advance life support unit in Long Rapids, Green, Wilson and Maple Ridge Townships to augment first responders coverage. There's also an inter-local agreement with Presque Isle Township to help officials and volunteers rebuild the Presque Isle Township Fire Department.

Intergovernmental meetings are taken seriously by the City. At these meetings we learn what the County and Townships are accomplishing and we discuss shared concerns. My vision is to continue the City's participation and further develop the City's relationship with surrounding governmental entities.

Rick Rafferty - We can do better. Including entities from the state and federal levels would help us as we work together to find grants, address areas of concern and improve the Alpena area.

Thomas VanDuinen - There is no cooperation between government except to waste our money. Work together for the best interest of the taxpayers

7) Periodically over the last several years, consolidation of services has been a desire of some residents to achieve more streamlined, efficient government. Please provide us your views on consolidation of services among Governmental entities.

Amber Hess – According to the City of Alpena Cooperation, Collaboration and Consolidation Report the City of Alpena has eighteen existing collaborative efforts with other governmental and non-profit agencies. Many of these have been ongoing for a number of years and they are providing operational efficiencies and/or cost savings to all parties. Some examples of these efforts are the County Wide Recycling Program, Community Economic Development through support of Target Alpena, the Fiber-Optic Consortium, and the Alpena County Central Dispatch/E-911 Center. In cases such as these, where collaboration and consolidation of services results in cost savings and efficiency, without negatively affecting the quality of services, I am in favor.

However, if consolidation of entities would lessen the safety or effectiveness of an entity, or possibly even increase costs, then I do not support it. In the past, there was interest by some in the idea of consolidating the City of Alpena Fire Department with the Alpena Twp. Fire Departments as well as the City of Alpena Police with the Alpena County Sheriff Department. After careful review by all parties it was determined that neither consolidation was of interest to the parties or advised for a variety of reasons. It was not considered feasible due to varying organizational structures and labor contracts and there was concern that it would likely result in a negative impact on service in the city without an increase in revenue. I believe that the firefighters and police are the experts in public safety and if they do not support consolidation of their departments I would not support it either.

Cal Howard – No response.

Cindy Johnson – Collaboration and cooperation between governmental entities is essential, and we should explore the possibility of consolidation services where doing so would result in greater efficiency and cost savings. The City currently contracts Information Technology services with the County, which has been beneficial in terms of cost savings and quality of services. On the other hand, a study found that a proposed consolidation of Fire/Police departments within the County would not provide sufficient benefit to either entity. I will continue to support consolidation of services when doing so will result in tangible benefits for the City and its residents.

Rick Rafferty - Consolidation of services should only occur when it saves the City money without negatively affecting services and is supported by the citizens of Alpena. I do not agree with the consolidation of police and fire into public safety.

Thomas VanDuinen - Any time you can combine services and provide the same or better service is the best way,

8) How do you know if the City is successful? How will you know if you are successful as a Council Member?

Amber Hess - I feel that the City of Alpena is successful if it is providing the services to its residents that it is supposed to efficiently and effectively. Another measure of success is feedback from residents who live here and whether or not they feel the City is serving them well and successfully creating a safe, positive environment in which they and their families can live, grow and prosper. Yet another benchmark of success is whether the City is following its Comprehensive Plan that is in place and meeting the goals established in that plan.

I will know if I am successful as a Council Member if I am accessible to residents, listen to them and take into account their views when it comes time to make decisions, educate myself on matters that may arise and make decisions that best represent the residents and will have a positive impact on our community. And after about 4 years on council, I will know if I am successful as a Council Member if I am reelected to serve another term.

Cal Howard – No response.

Cindy Johnson - The success of the City can be measured in a number of ways. Do we have a balanced budget? Every year Council is presented with a balance budget. Although some years are tighter than others, we live within our means and still manage to make upgrades in the City. Are we funding the retirement system? The retirement fund took a hit during the recession, but we are still funded better than most communities. We watch our investments and add money to the shortfall when our budget allows. How is our infrastructure? It is important to keep upgrading streets, water and sewer, and bridges. Do we have a quality fire and police department? Yes we do. Do we make it easy for people to

invest in Alpena? We encourage and work with any investor who would like to start a business in the City.

These are a few of the things that make us successful, along with all of the wonderful experiences businesses owners and other entities offer in Alpena: dining, live theater, music, shopping, fishing, boat tours, NOAA, Museums and our many festivals just to name a few. If we continue to grow and offer opportunities, we are successful. It has been an honor to serve the City, and as far as being successful as a councilwoman, I will leave it to the public to determine whether I am doing my part to contribute to the City's continue success.

Rick Rafferty - Alpena is already successful. The City could have become a ghost town after losing its industrial base. Instead, the city government and Alpena's citizens began to reinvent themselves and the City has remained active and vibrant today, shifting focus to becoming a tourist destination as well.

As for gauging my success when elected, I will do so through communicating openly with the people I serve and their satisfaction with the job I am doing.

Thomas VanDuinen - The city council's only success has been to waste millions of our tax dollars and listening to falsehoods. I will work to seek out the truth and bring those responsible for lies and deceit to justice.

9) Are there any last thoughts you would like to share?

Amber Hess – I love Alpena and I truly care about the day to day quality of life of those who call Alpena home. There is a positive movement happening in our community, especially over the last few years; a rising tide lifts all boats, so let's keep those waters rising for all of us by building on that momentum. More public art? Yes please! More outdoor dining? Yes please! More new businesses that create jobs? Yes please! More activities in our parks and around town? Yes please! More recreation and event options for youth and teens? Yes please! Alpena is already an amazing community in which to live...but, we can be even more. Do you want more? I do and I hope you will join me on this journey.

Cal Howard – No reponse.

Cindy Johnson – It has been a pleasure to work hard for the residents of the City. Some of my committees, boards and accomplishments over the last 4 years are:

- The Retirement Board - managing the retirement fund.
- IG Recycling - as a board member we are responsible for the success of recycling. I personally have worked on the education committee. Working with four other Counties we secured a grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to pay for new signage on the countywide recycling bins and educational fliers which were sent to every resident. We've also worked with the County to increase funding to make the recycling program sustainable. I work

Cleanup day in the Spring and encouraged the City to start putting out recycling bins in our local parks and within the DDA.

- IG Roads and IG Air and Water.
- DDA Design Committee – Chairperson and a member of the committee for nearly 20 years. The committee is responsible for improvements in the downtown and managing the Façade Grant Program.
- Alpena Dog Park Committee - We will bring Alpena's first dog park in to reality in the Spring of 2018.
- Huron Humane Society Board Member – Board Member, Secretary, Chair of Building and Grounds Committee, Vice Chair of Fundraising, Vice Chair Finance Committee, Vice Chair By-Laws Committee, Vice Chair of Gala Committee, also served on the Re-Tails Committee.
- Jail Committee – Studied feasibility of a new County Jail
- Adopted Culligan Plaza with Doug Pratt.
- Organized the improvements and coming to the DDA's Chisholm Street Park, which will tie the fish mural and the landscape together.
- Work Sunday Super at Trinity Episcopal Church.
- Helped organize the first Citywide Garage Sale.
- Worked with local cyclist to install, "Share the Road" signs. The City will now look at ways to include bike lanes on local roads when they upgrade them or try to incorporate them in parts of the City that are under our control. I drafted a joint resolution with the City and Alpena Township to promote cycling in our area. Cycling friendly communities encourage tourism.

Rick Rafferty - On November 7th, I encourage the people to write in Rick Rafferty and fill in the bubble for the open seat on City Council. I will be a member who listens to the community. Acts in their best interests. Works in a spirit of cooperation. I am not afraid to ask the hard questions or stand against the flow if need be.

Thomas VanDuinen - For too long the City of Alpena along with all governments everywhere have neglected their core role and that is to manage the public interest. The city has wasted much of our money on fluff and nonsense and neglected our infrastructure. For some reason those elected suddenly think that they know how to spend your money better than you do. I will work to make sure your tax dollars are spent on what they are intended for.