

## Candidate Questionnaire Responses

The West Coast Chamber serves as an advocate for business at the local, state, and federal level for our 1,200+ member organizations and nearly 80,000 member employees. Our commitment is to educate our members on important policy issues, provide access to our elected officials, and serve as an advocate for a business-friendly environment.

In an effort to educate our community and prepare residents to cast their ballot in the upcoming election, we created and shared a brief questionnaire with all candidates running for city office to better understand their stance on business related issues. All candidates were contacted and given two weeks to respond to the questionnaire. Responses from those who completed the questionnaire are reflected below.

# City of Zeeland Mayor Candidates

Richard Van Dorp III

## **Regulation & Permitting -- What steps would you take to ensure city policies and processes, such as zoning and permitting, support business growth while balancing community needs?**

The City of Zeeland has been viewed as a business and development friendly community not only for the policies we support, but also by making the process as smooth as possible for those looking to invest in our community.

## **Housing & Affordability -- How would you address the housing challenges that impact both residents and employers' ability to attract and retain workers?**

Over the past several years the city has supported several projects with Act 210 and Brownfield Redevelopment tax incentives which have added much needed housing options within our city. As Mayor I will continue to support similar projects to ensure we have additional housing options for current and future residents.

## **Infrastructure -- Transportation & Growth How would you approach investments in infrastructure (roads, broadband, utilities, transportation) to meet the needs of residents and employers while ensuring fiscal responsibility?**

The City of Zeeland has some of the lowest utility costs in the region and I will continue to support policies that keep those prices low for our businesses and residents.

We have always had an aggressive approach to investing in our infrastructure and I plan to see that continue as our next Mayor.

## **Downtown & Commercial Districts -- What is your vision for supporting vibrant downtowns and commercial corridors that attract businesses, talent, and visitors?**

I will continue to support events which bring both residents and visitors alike to our downtown, which help support our small businesses. I will also continue to support policies which help developers and small business owners continue to invest in their properties.

## **Future Vision & Leadership -- Looking ahead 5–10 years, what is your vision for the city's economic future, and what specific actions would you champion as a councilmember to make it a reality?**

Zeeland has a long history of supporting incentives such as Brownfield, Act 198 and Act 210's which make it economical for business to expand and grow in our community, and I plan to ensure that these pro-growth policies continue during my term as Mayor.

# Zeeland City Council Candidates

Ericka Humbert

## **Regulation & Permitting -- What steps would you take to ensure city policies and processes, such as zoning and permitting, support business growth while balancing community needs?**

I believe an important way to mutually support businesses and community members is to have a clear, future-forward and data-driven plan that informs decision making. There is only so much one can predict in a city's future— having an agreed upon, overarching vision provides the ability to navigate expected and unexpected circumstances with clarity and confidence, especially regarding situations that are more nuanced in whether or not the outcome equally benefits residents and businesses. Our city, while extremely desirable from both a residential and commercial perspective, has limited space and resources. Decisions must be carefully weighed to ensure the final decision represents the best outcome for Zeeland. Knowing that the current Masterplan needs to be updated, it's vital the future version is built upon thorough research with dedicated effort to ensure insights are collected throughout the city and include detailed feedback from both residents and businesses about their current successes, obstacles, needs and hopes for the future. A healthy city knows growth requires action, but that action must be first informed by listening and learning from others, helping keep a strong legacy centered as it moves into the future.

## **Housing & Affordability -- How would you address the housing challenges that impact both residents and employers' ability to attract and retain workers?**

A recent presentation given at a council meeting highlighted that a key frustration employees in our area experience is the lack of housing options and affordability. With so many wonderful businesses in Zeeland offering strong career opportunities, our council certainly wants to do our part to help attract and retain talent! One exciting area I'd love to see continue to grow is a commitment to thoughtful, effective housing solutions that creatively make use of Zeeland's available resources, such as the new Sligh apartments or the Brownfield project at State and Main. I believe we should protect current housing, carefully weighing the costs of expansion projects that remove housing opportunities, seeking solutions that benefit both initiatives whenever possible. Additionally, I know housing is an issue throughout Ottawa County, so I think it's important we stay informed of broader discussions, resources or projects that would benefit our city. Finally, while being able to offer housing to anyone interested in living in Zeeland is the goal, I also think ensuring infrastructure decisions consider commuters' experiences with parking, traffic flow, bike paths, amenities and bus routes is another important way council can support our local businesses and their workforces.

## **Infrastructure -- Transportation & Growth How would you approach investments in infrastructure (roads, broadband, utilities, transportation) to meet the needs of residents and employers while ensuring fiscal responsibility?**

As a communications and marketing specialist, my career is rooted in data, research and informed decision-making. Just because something initially sounds like a good idea or worked for someone else doesn't mean, after considering our specific circumstances, it's therefore the right choice for us. I know our council upholds this perspective, as demonstrated through recent discussions about whether to pursue broadband or parking ramps. I would strive to continue this track record, pushing us to be forward-thinking where it makes the best sense for Zeeland, supporting decisions that enable our community to face future growth and opportunities. Many infrastructure projects take years to plan and execute. Doing them responsibly requires a dedication to evaluating if projects consider the connections between current issues and possible future needs. For example, if the city is going to tear up the road to repair sewer lines, they discuss the repairs but also evaluate if this is an opportunity to institute upgrades that could handle future changes in utility needs due to commercial or residential growth. I believe this is exactly the mindset a city needs to make effective, responsible decisions that prepare for the future while stewarding well what we already have.

**Downtown & Commercial Districts -- What is your vision for supporting vibrant downtowns and commercial corridors that attract businesses, talent, and visitors?**

Having had a Zeeland address nearly my whole life, it's been amazing watching the incredible change that has happened over the last several decades. From beautification efforts, family-friendly amenities and events, ordinance changes, parking initiatives— there are countless examples of work that has been done to turn Zeeland into a destination, something I am very passionate about continuing. I would be a strong advocate for prioritizing initiatives that encourage reasons for visitors to linger, retain residents by continuing to grow available amenities, and equip businesses with what they need to thrive. I am excited by the potential of creating a recreational center that would significantly increase our ability to include more residents of all ages in programming, and I have appreciated the city's efforts to try to solve the parking problems downtown. I would love to see continued focus on updating public spaces and making downtown accessible, safe and welcoming. I would also support beautification and walkability efforts in our commercial corridors and seeking to understand any specific needs of the businesses there.

**Future Vision & Leadership -- Looking ahead 5–10 years, what is your vision for the city's economic future, and what specific actions would you champion as a councilmember to make it a reality?**

I believe Zeeland is currently in an extremely strong position— a strong tax base, robust employment and abundance of job opportunities, thriving community culture, noticeable beautification, and many important improvements. But just because things are going well doesn't mean we aren't at a critical juncture. Our current position is because of decisions made five, ten, twenty years ago. When I envision a healthy, thriving Zeeland in 5-10 years, I first focus on the responsibility and meaningful forethought that vision will require of its leaders today. There are many ways a city can choose to invest time, money and resources—but distributing those wisely is key. Despite our positive momentum, we must avoid flippant decision making, continuing to hold ourselves accountable to ensuring all strategic planning stays focused on prioritizing the most beneficial ways to attract and come alongside residents, businesses and visitors in our area for continued future success. I believe through tactful questioning, intentional

research, a commitment to our values and a desire to listen to the needs from all corners of our community will ensure the decisions we make today also will hold true in the future.

## Glenn Kass

### **Regulation & Permitting -- What steps would you take to ensure city policies and processes, such as zoning and permitting, support business growth while balancing community needs?**

Serving on planning commission has given me great opportunity to see first hand the positive impacts that expansion has on our businesses viability and success. Millions of dollars are invested here because of the climate of cooperation and collaboration between the city and industry. I will continue to work with all interested parties on a planning commission level and city council level just as I have for my 13 years on planning commission and my 16 years on city council. I strive to be open to all concerns and try to address needs throughout the city

### **Housing & Affordability -- How would you address the housing challenges that impact both residents and employers' ability to attract and retain workers?**

If this was an easy matter to fix, it would have already been solved. People can't afford rent. Businesses are unwilling to pay more. Zoning regulations are cumbersome to more housing. The city is, in essence, built out. However, there are things we can do. We can shrink minimum lot size requirements....shrink the minimum setback requirements also. Small steps for sure but every little piece helps. The townships really need to take the lead because as I said the City of Zeeland is essentially built out.

### **Infrastructure -- Transportation & Growth How would you approach investments in infrastructure (roads, broadband, utilities, transportation) to meet the needs of residents and employers while ensuring fiscal responsibility?**

We reinvest approximately \$3 million per year on our road water sewer infrastructure currently. Max bus runs through Zeeland. The business community needs the infrastructure we provide to be successful and we need the businesses to provide the jobs. We are all in this together. JR Automation is relocating its headquarters to Zeeland partly because we are committed to improving the infrastructure around their site on Riley. I'm proud to partner with the business community!

### **Downtown & Commercial Districts -- What is your vision for supporting vibrant downtowns and commercial corridors that attract businesses, talent, and visitors?**

My vision includes the continued use of Act 210 commercial rehab tax incentives. Numerous businesses have taken advantage of this incentive over the last few years and the benefits are obvious. Also, the snowmelt that has been installed the last 2 years will be a huge benefit in the coming years and expansion of the snowmelt system is on the horizon. I am proud to have been a part of these decisions and pledge to continue doing more for our downtown businesses and customers.

**Future Vision & Leadership -- Looking ahead 5–10 years, what is your vision for the city’s economic future, and what specific actions would you champion as a councilmember to make it a reality?**

I serve on the Act 198 Exemption Committee currently. I will continue to be receptive to projects big and small in that role. The amount of money invested and the number of jobs that are created is quite amazing to be honest. I would love to see a bit of diversification of our tax base. However, overall I am very satisfied with how the city and the business community have a great relationship. I strive to maintain and improve our commitment to the community

## Amy Langeland

### **Regulation & Permitting -- What steps would you take to ensure city policies and processes, such as zoning and permitting, support business growth while balancing community needs?**

Review current zoning laws while taking into consideration residential and business needs also. We want to encourage growth but not harm the residential charm and character of Zeeland.

### **Housing & Affordability -- How would you address the housing challenges that impact both residents and employers' ability to attract and retain workers?**

The city of Zeeland has encouraged new housing developments such as Sligh apartments and townhomes and the new mixed development on State and Main which will include 22 new residential units.

### **Infrastructure -- Transportation & Growth How would you approach investments in infrastructure (roads, broadband, utilities, transportation) to meet the needs of residents and employers while ensuring fiscal responsibility?**

The city of Zeeland has always been fiscally responsible while updating the services and utilities of residents and businesses in Zeeland. I would support the current status and plans in place.

### **Downtown & Commercial Districts -- What is your vision for supporting vibrant downtowns and commercial corridors that attract businesses, talent, and visitors?**

I believe the City of Zeeland has done a wonderful job creating a delightful and vibrant downtown, encouraging visitors to shop, eat, and visit while attracting a variety of business that all are pleasant to visit. I support the city and their team in their efforts.

### **Future Vision & Leadership -- Looking ahead 5–10 years, what is your vision for the city's economic future, and what specific actions would you champion as a councilmember to make it a reality?**

I would like to use my experience and past efforts in my experience on the cemetery and parks master plan and 30 years of other volunteer and professional work to extend those efforts into the new master plan of the City of Zeeland. I would like to maintain the charm and character of Zeeland while fostering a healthy business environment.

## Rebecca Perkins

### **Regulation & Permitting -- What steps would you take to ensure city policies and processes, such as zoning and permitting, support business growth while balancing community needs?**

I am a strong supporter of business growth in our city, and I know how important it is to listen while also balancing community feedback. The City of Zeeland already does an excellent job maintaining clear and consistent processes, while remaining open to improvements that make it easier for businesses to succeed.

Having served on Zeeland's Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Board of Review, I understand how critical it is to support thoughtful growth while preserving the character that makes Zeeland so special. Our zoning and permitting processes should continue to be efficient, transparent, and predictable—ensuring businesses receive timely responses and that the city serves as a partner, not a barrier.

I will work to strengthen dialogue between business owners, city staff, and residents to identify opportunities for improvement—whether by streamlining permitting, updating ordinances, or enhancing early communication. Strong partnerships between city leaders, staff and local businesses build sustainable growth and lasting community trust.

### **Housing & Affordability -- How would you address the housing challenges that impact both residents and employers' ability to attract and retain workers?**

Housing affordability is a challenge nationwide, and Zeeland is no exception. As a local Realtor for over 23 years, I've seen firsthand how limited housing options impact both residents and employers.

Zeeland's biggest constraint is our limited land for expansion, which requires creative and balanced solutions. I'm proud of the city's recent progress—adding more than 80 new housing options in the past 18 months through collaboration among city leaders, staff, and local partners. These efforts show what can happen when we think long-term, remain open-minded, and align decisions with our community's vision.

Our goal must be to continue creating diverse housing types at various price points while preserving Zeeland's small-town character and respecting property rights. Collaboration is essential—by listening to and working with local businesses, developers, employers, township neighbors, and regional partners, we can identify solutions that make sense for Zeeland.

Through thoughtful planning, innovative approaches like mixed-use and infill developments, Zeeland can remain a community where people can live, work, and thrive.

### **Infrastructure -- Transportation & Growth How would you approach investments in infrastructure (roads, broadband, utilities, transportation) to meet the needs of residents and employers while ensuring fiscal responsibility?**



Strong infrastructure is the foundation of a thriving community, and Zeeland has done an excellent job of being forward-thinking in its approach. As a current member of the Planning Commission, I've seen firsthand how well the city plans ahead for roads, utilities, and long-term maintenance to support both industrial and residential growth.

Our city is quaint, well maintained, and reflects true pride of ownership and involvement. Zeeland has been both diligent and fiscally responsible—benefiting from a strong industrial tax base that supports 60% of our revenues, and maintaining the second-lowest city millage rate in Ottawa County.

The city's commitment to strategic and long-term planning has positioned us well for the future. As a council member, I would continue to support that forward vision by encouraging the use of consultants when evaluating large or complex developments to ensure sustainable growth. It's important that we continue investing in projects that strengthen our economy, support our residents, and preserve the quality of life that makes Zeeland so desirable.

**Downtown & Commercial Districts -- What is your vision for supporting vibrant downtowns and commercial corridors that attract businesses, talent, and visitors?**

Downtown Zeeland is the heart of our community, and its continued vitality is essential to our city's success. Over the past 15 years, we've made tremendous progress, creating a welcoming, pedestrian-friendly, and vibrant environment that reflects our community pride.

The addition of the Zeeland Marketing Team and the "Feel the Zeel" campaign has been monumental in creating positive exposure and a fresh energy that continues to attract new businesses and restaurants. Our small business district has a strong voice in the community, helping city leaders better understand and support the needs of our downtown.

Through my service on the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and regular attendance at City Council meetings, I've seen firsthand the power of collaboration between city staff, business owners, and residents.

We can continue building on this momentum by supporting local entrepreneurs, attracting diverse businesses, enhancing public spaces, and improving the entrances to our commercial corridors. A thriving downtown is the result of thoughtful planning, shared vision, and community pride—and I'm committed to helping Zeeland remain a place where people want to live, invest, and visit.

**Future Vision & Leadership -- Looking ahead 5–10 years, what is your vision for the city's economic future, and what specific actions would you champion as a councilmember to make it a reality?**

I'm excited to see Zeeland's progress over the next 5–10 years. I envision a community that continues to grow thoughtfully—embracing innovation and creative thinking while preserving the warmth and character that make Zeeland so special.

A strong future depends on maintaining partnerships among city leaders, staff, residents, and both small and large businesses. It also means continued investment in infrastructure, creative housing solutions that maximize our limited land, and technology that supports long-term economic stability.

As a council member, I would approach every decision with an open mind—listening, learning, and asking questions to understand each perspective and its impact on our community. My goal is to ensure that every choice we make today builds a vibrant, connected, and resilient Zeeland for tomorrow.

Zeeland's greatest strength lies in its people. Together, we can continue building a future that honors our past while creating new opportunities for generations to come.

Andrew Bult

*Did not respond.*

Kylee DeBoer

*Did not respond.*