

## Candidate's Corner



**Jim Salzwedel**

Council Member, Jim Salzwedel, is from Columbus, Wisconsin, a small town north of Madison, about the size as Lowell, but he's been in Michigan since 1968 in Lowell since 2006. "Even though I was born there," Salzwedel said, "this is definitely my home." Salzwedel's wife, Lynette, is a Lowell native who grew up on Maple Street. They have three children, six grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. Salzwedel attended Forest Hills High School, which merged with Forest Hills Central, before working in the home appliance business as a technician, the head of the service department, project manager, and director of sales. Finally, on January 1, Salzwedel retired. Salzwedel has always been involved in the community. When his children were younger, he was a Little League coach, and later he coached high school athletics at Wyoming/Groesville. When he started seriously considering a political run, he approached Mayor Jim Hodges for advice. Hodges suggested that Salzwedel show-up to all of the city council meetings and join a committee. Salzwedel followed Hodges' advice and found himself appointed to the Planning Commission, and quickly, he was elected to Lowell City Council, where he became the liaison to Lowell Light & Power. During Salzwedel's tenure on the City Council, he's

proud of the great start the team has made addressing road repair. Salzwedel has no problem with the prevalence of marijuana dispensaries as; a result, the companies make the buildings look beautiful, the taxes from the industry pay for the roads, and there has not been a significant uptick in crime. As for the fact that there are so many marijuana dispensaries in town, Salzwedel believes that the market will eventually limit them.

One of the reasons Salzwedel seeks re-election is because many of the city's biggest concerns require time and consistency. For example, Salzwedel still has a number of ideas for solving the water crisis between the City of Lowell and Lowell Township. Unfortunately, there are no broad-stroke solutions. The water agreement needs to be restructured, the Township, which accounts for 90 percent of the growth within the system, needs to pay for more and talks need to continue, possibly evolving into a joint-water authority.

Salzwedel is a supporter of Lowell Pride, and he has been present to approve every single permit they have submitted. In response to the claims of profanity at the event, Salzwedel pointed to the city's attorney, who is looking to write-up a contract for behavior expectations at public, outdoor events. Salzwedel's main concern is the proper balance between freedom of speech and limiting profanity, because the worst thing the city could do would be to interfere with the Constitutional rights of those who attend the event.

Salzwedel is trusted by his peers on the council for his attention to detail, which he explains as a side-effect of working in the security business. His process, however, is simple. He reads the agenda for each meeting, and accompanying documents, multiple times, and he tries to pick out details and questions he believes are relevant to the general public. When the city became interested in purchasing Flock cameras, Salzwedel went the extra mile — what he calls his "due diligence" — and reached out to contacts at the Wyoming Police Department, who have used them for some time now.

In his next term, Salzwedel wishes to figure out a plan to make the Showboat 501(c)3 self-sustaining, fix the playground at Creekside Park, develop Recreation Park, and find room in the budget for more full-time police officers.

## Kent District Library asks for millage renewal with a twist

By Cliff Yankovich  
contributing writer

Remember to get out and vote on Tuesday, November 7th. One of the important items on the ballot this time will be a millage request from the Kent District Library (KDL). The "twist" in this millage request from them is that they are actually looking for less money from taxpayers. Yes, you read that correctly — the request of 1.1 mills is actually 10.9 percent less than the current millage we are all paying to sustain our library system in Kent County, which includes the Englehardt Branch in Lowell and the Alto Library in Alto.

What makes this even easier to vote in favor of is the fact that the slightly higher millage being paid currently was voted by us to be in place until December 31, 2024. However, the KDL Board has committed to lowering the effective rate on January 1, 2024 if the millage effort passes.

"KDL is able to lower its millage because we are a part of a thriving and growing community where new taxable real estate has produced more revenue," said KDL Board Chair Andy Erlewein. "As good stewards of taxpayer dollars, we want to lock-in savings for residents now."

Those who do not take advantage of the many products and services available at any of the 20 branches, might be thinking, "Well, they should lower the millage rate, no one goes to the library anymore, anyway." Nothing could be further from the truth. KDL saw the addition of more than twenty thousand (20,395) new card holders last year. They also recorded a stunning increase of 61 percent in attendance numbers when they added up all of the people who interacted with KDL through their various programs and outreaches.

At this point, it is helpful to remember that KDL is much bigger than just our Lowell and Alto branches. KDL operates

twenty locations, an Express Library (located in the Grattan Township Hall with the intention of building a full time branch in that township soon), a bookmobile, and the main Service Center. In total, KDL hosts more than 5,600 programs every year, along with a variety of other services.

In case you have not been to the library in a while, we asked District Manager, Kurt Lardie, about everything KDL has to offer.

"The library offers programs at various times during the week. We offer a Beyond Books Collection, where you can borrow camping equipment, games, Nintendo switches, video games, star-gazing binoculars, a portable tire inflator, a portable projector and screen for presentations or family movie nights," he responded.

"The library also provides online digital resources, such as Rosetta Stone, for language learning, Linked In Learning for job skills, Scholastic Teachables for teachers and homeschoolers, and so much more. Most importantly, the library is a place in the community where everyone is welcome. You can use study rooms, computers, books, CD's. We have a play space for young kids, a teen zone and activities for everyone. KDL is here to further all people, and it's a fun place to visit and get involved!"

Obviously, the libraries we have in Kent County are no longer just loaning books and CD's out to patrons. Some of the programs offered, like the very popular Storytime for kids, are available at all locations (FYI — the Lowell branch hosts three storytime programs every week.) Other programs are chosen by staff members, with the input from library patrons at the various branches, to offer at their particular location. The

**KDL Millage continued page 12**

## Candidate's Corner



**Sharon Shah**

Sharon Shah grew up in Caledonia and moved to Lowell a decade ago. She currently lives next to the middle school with her daughter and teenage fashionista, Olivia. Sharon spent several years doing nursing and physical therapy, and she's currently in the middle of a career change. Her ultimate goal is to become a stamping architect, the final step of approval to determine if the blueprints for a building are safe to build. Sharon also volunteers as a mentor at Cherry Creek Elementary through Kids Hope USA, and she's a nutritionist at Alpha Care Center. As needed, she works as a child car seat-safety inspector, and she distributes stroller car seats to people in need. "I have a servant's heart," Sharon said, "and I love people." Sharon wishes to serve on city council because she's in a healthy spot in her life, and she wants to make herself available as a role model for children. In the current political climate, Sharon worries that groups are doing all of the talking, thereby drowning out individual voices, and she wants to make it clear to everybody in the community that their voices matter. As such, she wants to be a part of city council that is open, tolerant, and respectful, one that respects people's differences. Many in the community have aligned Sharon with Stefanie

Boone, who has been vocal in her opposition to a number of educators and administrators in Lowell Area Schools. Sharon is not active with the school board, and her only interactions with Boone are via her role as administrator of the Lowell MI Community Chatter Facebook group. Sharon notes that both she and Boone are "Bible-believing Christians," but contrary to Boone, Sharon supports the efforts of educators who have worked to make the school safe and inclusive for LGBTQ+ youth.

Sharon was not as concerned with the so-called vulgarity of the Lowell Pride event. Though the event was advertised as family-friendly, the children who attended, did so with their parents or adult chaperones, who are capable of talking to their children about what they see. In general, she believes Lowell Pride is an important economic opportunity for the community, and she has LGBTQ+ family members who value having a safe place like this in the Lowell community. Her main concern with the event is its use of private security instead of the Lowell Police Department.

Sharon believes the marijuana dispensaries in Lowell are an important economic opportunity for the community. While they have helped curb the appeal of commercial real estate, with no observable negative effects on the community, Sharon has noticed that there is a stigma for some residents associated with the smell of marijuana, which she believes could be easily resolved if people ate edibles rather than smoking.

Contrary to gossip, Sharon is uninterested in selling Lowell Light & Power, and she met with the utility's general manager, Charlie West, to make this clear. She also believes that the water plan needs to be renegotiated because it's not currently working.

"I want you to know that my heart is not in this race for politics' sake," Sharon said. "It's fueled by a deep sense of gratitude for the incredible community we call home, and a genuine care for the health and well-being of every person who resides here."

Sharon's email address is info@sharonshah.info, website is Sharonshah.info, and Facebook page is Sharon Shah for Lowell City Council.



# obituaries

## ROGERS

Steven Patrick Rogers, age 55 of Lowell, passed away Wednesday, October 11, 2023. He was preceded in death by his brother, Gordon "Donny" Rogers. Steven is survived by his father, Gordon (Nancy) Rogers; mother, Laura Ellison; brother, Alex Ellison; sisters, Kathy Corcoran Patricia Ellison; and long time friend Roger Stauffer.



Steven had a heart larger than life especially for children and a genuine passion for making a positive impact on their lives. His commitment to spreading joy was evident through his dedicated support of Toys for Tots each Christmas, ensuring that underprivileged children had a reason to smile

during the holiday season. He also enjoyed the thrill of football, cars, and car racing, finding joy and excitement in these passions. Stevens' infectious enthusiasm and boundless love for both his community and the things he cherished will be deeply missed by his parents and friends. Memorial contributions can be made to Toys for Tots at [grand-rapids-mi.toysfortots.org](http://grand-rapids-mi.toysfortots.org).

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## HARJU

Vernon John Harju, age 71 of Lowell, passed away Monday, October 16, 2023. He was preceded in death by his parents, Nestor and Irene Harju; brothers, Earl Junttonen, Calvin Junttonen; sisters Violet Kuusisto and Lois Rintala; brothers-in-law Bruce Smith, Wester Rintala; sister-in-law, Maryann Junttonen. Vernon is survived by his wife of 50 years, Donna Harju; children, Derek (Dulce) Harju, Brittany (Tony) Quint; sisters, Laurian (Ron) Osantowski, Neldine Smith; grandchildren, Maxima, Malia Harju, Nicholas Quint; father-in-law and mother-in-law, Donald and Elizabeth Charter; and many nieces and nephews.



Vernon served his country with unwavering commitment for 11 years in the US Navy as a dedicated hospital corpsman. Following his military career, he continued to make a significant impact on the lives of others during his 12 years at Trinity Health St. Mary's Hospital. Vernon's passion extended beyond his professional life, he found joy in the art of woodworking and the meticulous art of refinishing furniture. He cherished spending time with his grandchildren and cheering for the Red Wings, a team that he loved. Vernon's legacy of service, craftsmanship, and love for his favorite hockey team will be cherished and remembered by all who had the privilege of knowing him. Visitation will be held from 2-4pm on Saturday, October 21, 2023, at Roth-Gerst Chapel, 305 N. Hudson, Lowell, Michigan, 49331. Memorial contributions can be made to Michigan Veteran Homes, <https://www.michigan.gov/mvh/support/make-a-gift>.

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## LARKIN

Josephine (Josie) Larkin, born on May 22, 1946, in Terrasini, Sicily, passed away peacefully on October 17, 2023, surrounded by her loved ones. She graduated from Catholic Central High School in 1964. Josie was a beloved wife, mother, sister, grandmother, great grandmother & friend. Josie leaves behind the love of her life, Stephen Larkin, they had 57 wonderful years together. She also leaves behind her daughters, Patricia (Dave Pearce) Larkin, Julia (Richard) Dodge; her grandchildren, Steven (Gabbi) Krause, Brittany Larkin, Dylan Dodge, Rachel Dodge, John Pearce, Melanie Peare, Dennis Pearce; and great grandchildren, Amiyah, Bailey, Lexis, Brody &



Gianna. Josie always made it a priority to be there for her friends & family. Whether it was Sunday dinners, the kids sporting events, class reunions, or birthday parties, she was happy to be there supporting her loved ones. She enjoyed traveling with her husband Steve, seeing many countries and fabulous locations around the world. She was the backbone of the family-owned restaurant for many years, preparing delicious food. Not only did she cook at the restaurant, but she also especially enjoyed cooking for family. She also loved watching movies, reading books, going to the beach, going to the casino, but most of all, she loved spending quality time with her friends and family. She was a lover and supporter of all animals, especially cats, and she leaves behind her newest baby kitty Cannoli, whom she loved. In Josie's own words, she "had a great life, a great love, and great family". She will be missed by so many. Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 11 am on November 3, 2023 at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, 6390 Belmont Ave NE, Belmont, MI 49306, with visitation at 10 am. A luncheon will follow Mass.

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# ABCs, continued

and several injured by a masked battery hidden in the hills to control the approaching troops. While their company sustained these losses, it could have been much worse had they been in with the attack on Santiago. He describes the losses, taking the city of Santiago, as very severe. On the third day, he was on scout duty when he saw the Spanish fleet make their dash out of the harbor. He saw the naval battle and the destruction of the entire fleet. He assures the hometown readers that the Lowell boys, though some have had narrow escapes,

are well and feeling good. July 28, 1898 - Santiago, Cuba, from Sergt. Clarence E. Long, Co. L. 33 Mich. Vol. Inf: Clarence tells Lowell readers that hometown boy, Maurice Lang, was in the hospital but had lost track of him. Other than Lang, he says all of the Lowell boys are well. September 8, 1898, brought the news all of Lowell had been waiting to hear. "Soldier Boys Home" the headlines shouted. Lowell rejoiced as none of the hometown boys had been lost in the war. Businesses decorated in red, white and

blue, and all the people turned out in hundreds to greet the returning heroes as the Lowell & Hastings train arrived. There was music by the band, firing of guns and shouts of the people. Four were on the train, Clarence Long, Hayes Rolf, Bert Fenning and Sherman Reynolds. Ullman Hawk had arrived home a few days before, quite sick. Nonetheless, he greeted the others and shared in the reception. The band led the way to Island Park, south of Main Street, and an impromptu program was carried out. There was patriotic

music, speeches, and then, despite the weakened state of the soldiers, the people proceeded to shake all of their hands. Morris Lang and Charles Dickerson were in the hospital but were expected home soon. Robert Jones from the 32nd regiment was ill in a Detroit hospital. Many of these new veterans participated in groups such as the American Legion and the United Spanish War Veterans Camps, continuing to serve and support their fellow veterans and preserve the memories of their service in this little-known war.

# KDL Millage, continued

Lowell staff works to tailor the offerings here, based on responses and interest expressed from area residents. The best way to familiarize yourself with everything available at the Englehardt branch, as well as all the other locations, is to spend some time at the website: [www.KDL.org](http://www.KDL.org). Lardie continued, "The Beyond Books Collection is extremely popular with our patrons. The most

checked-out item is the Verizon WiFi Hotspots. These allow people without internet to have access in their homes for up to four months. Another desirable item is the PerkPass. This pass allows limited, free visits to various venues, such as Fredrick Meijer Gardens, Grand Rapids Art Museum, the Children's Museum and even the YMCA." To recap: you can become a member of KDL

for free. Once you are a member, you can take advantage of a myriad of services, devices, and even visits to some of the area's great museums, for free. To further sweeten the pot, once you are a card-carrying member of KDL, you can receive emails that will update you on programs and events. You can also make your voice heard by letting KDL know what type of interests you and your family enjoy and would love to see at your favorite local branch. We asked Lardie to provide us with some numbers, regarding the Lowell branch. According to him, in 2022, Englehardt/Lowell patrons checked-out 164,296 physical

items, 53,236 digital items like movies and eBooks. In-person program attendance is setting new records, with 4,456 people attending in-person programs so far this year - that's 44 percent more than attended in all of 2022. There was a total of 61,890 in-person visits last year. Hopefully, what you have read here will dispel any thought that the taxpayers who support the KDL library system are not getting a return on their investment. Even in this highly digital age, without dependence on screens of every kind, the demand for what the libraries offer is on the rise from year-to-year. If you have any further questions about the millage, grab your favorite method to access the internet and go to [www.kdl.org/millage](http://www.kdl.org/millage).

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