

Gabriel Rees

Candidate Information

Candidacy for:	Trustee
Campaign page:	www.gabrielrees.com
Email address:	Rees4Redford@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Business analyst at a software company
Party:	Democrat
Resident of Redford	23 years

All answers below are verbatim from the candidate's responses to the questionnaire. Edits were made to correct minor errors (e.g. a misplaced apostrophe). Bracketed words are edits where words were inadvertently left out by the candidate. Unanswered questions are left blank.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Why are you running for office? To serve the people of Redford Township. Using my experience and insight that I have gained over the past 5 years of committed engagement and attendance of Board Meetings, public events, and committees in the township, I believe I bring a fresh perspective and practical wisdom for how to focus on key services in our township to provide improved support to all of our residents.

What experience do you bring to the role for which you are running? 2 years of service on the Redford Zoning Board of Appeals, experience as a small business owner, and nearly 5 years of active engagement in Redford's Board of Trustee semi-monthly meetings.

AFFORDABLE LIVING IN REDFORD

Do you consider Redford an affordable community for its current and prospective residents? Yes

Please explain your answer to the question above. How is it proving affordable? Or if unaffordable, what changes would you advocate to make it more so? Redford has long served as a community where people start out their journey of home ownership and family growth. Due to our location between Detroit and other westward suburbs, Redford is uniquely positioned with relatively affordable real estate that is close to shopping and amenities in Livonia, Farmington Hills, and beyond.

REDFORD BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Is Redford's vision to be a business-friendly community succeeding? Undecided

How is Redford succeeding or not succeeding to be a business-friendly community? What specifically could the Board of Trustees do, if anything, to bring more businesses into Redford? Redford is business friendly in the sense that we do not have particularly onerous ordinances or regulations on businesses, and in our desire to attract and retain thriving businesses. Where it may not be considered business friendly is in the efficacy of Redford's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) district, and in our occupancy rate of industrial spaces in the I-96 corridor. The DDA is intended to incubate small businesses that draw foot traffic and commerce to the township, and through this growth attract chain businesses with national footprints. Unfortunately Redford has never reached the "critical mass" of businesses/consumers to attract those larger chain retailers, which all seem to choose Livonia over Redford. So in summary: Redford is open and friendly to new businesses, but lacks some of the key metrics that many are looking for in order to choose Redford for large investments in buildings, leases, and other long-term expenses.

I believe the government of Redford is limited in the scope of what it can do to remedy this, but it can work to encourage, identify, and educate residents who desire to pursue entrepreneurship, particularly in retail/food businesses

that could begin forming a true downtown for the township. It's much more of an unofficial role, but using connections and relationships to assist business owners who commit to putting their savings into Redford is something that would be of great benefit to the township.

CRIME/POLICE

With the current challenge to recruit new officers into the police department, do you believe safety and security in Redford are at risk? No

Please share your thoughts on police officer recruitment and its impact on the safety and security of the community. Our emergency services and first responders continue to provide an excellent standard of service to the township despite the open slots on the roster, but many of the additional "bonus" roles that allow for greater community engagement and communication with residents are lost in the effort to keep all resources on critical roles. While I am not deeply informed on Redford's compensation and benefits packages for our police officers, it seems to me that additional (and perhaps creative) incentives should be explored to attract and retain officers. I also believe firm and vocal support of our police force should be expressed frequently by our elected officials to reinforce our support for their dangerous and much needed work in our community. The more we confirm and communicate our support for those who have our backs, I believe we'll see more applicants choose to build their career in Redford Township.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

In light of today's divisive cultural climate, there is debate on whether the current restriction of speech which threatens or incites direct physical violence should be expanded to include speech perceived as emotionally or spiritually harmful (or "hate speech" as it is often called).

Do you support modifying the free speech standard to disallow speech that is perceived as emotionally or spiritually harmful? No

Please explain your position regarding speech that is perceived as emotionally/spiritually harmful and how it relates to the First Amendment. Freedom of speech is of paramount importance. There shall be no "abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press...". Every citizen has this right, and I believe civil, caring discourse between members of our community is the best and most lasting way to move forward as a people. While many people

choose mean, ugly speech to address others, I have personally seen how it closes those people off and doesn't achieve what they often intend. On the other hand, when individuals use their freedom with wisdom and care, they can connect and see positive change by their words.

We don't all have to agree, and in fact, our disagreements are key to finding better solutions for our community, but the only way we get there is if everyone has the freedom to express what they truly believe in accordance with their conscience.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES

Do you believe the promotion of DEI initiatives in Redford Township's government and community activities is beneficial or not beneficial? Not beneficial

Please share the pros and cons that you see related to DEI either in principle or implementation. This question can be a bit fraught, and I do think there is some nuance to be had, so I'll do my best to succinctly share my perspective:

Citizens, community groups (that are not government sponsored), and independent organizations have every right to pursue what they believe to be the best way to strengthen the fabric of our community. For many, this has looked like instituting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, which has been a popular framework over the past few years. Where DEI becomes unproductive, in my view, is when it is implemented by a government organization, or any institution that has a level of coercive power (in the classical sense, not physical force per se) to set policy and law. I believe that DEI, while often instituted with positive intent, carries with it multiple ideologically/politically/religiously controversial concepts surrounding immutable and mutable characteristics. Because of this, instituting of DEI policies and practices often cause division within constituencies rather than unity, which would seem to undermine one of the core goals of DEI initiatives. I recognize that proponents of these policies may not believe these points of conflict are accurate or valid, or may even think that to oppose these positions is to advocate for bigotry, but regardless of one's personal position, it is clear that there is a conflict of visions and worldviews that comes to a head when DEI is discussed.

I personally believe it's important to recognize that many individuals and groups feel they have not been well represented or heard in our community in the past, and I'm sure they have good reason to believe this. My desire is that, through equality of opportunity, rigorous expression of free speech & public debate, and real connection and conversations in our community, we can foster a culture that celebrates what makes us unique individuals, but does so without sowing further division along religious, political, and social lines. I will always advocate for people to be heard, but I believe official policies and structures that advocate specific perspectives in our government are counterproductive for producing genuine, lasting progress in Redford.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Do you believe humanity's impact on climate change poses an immediate threat to the Redford community? No

Please share how Redford should respond to this issue. There is no immediate and direct threat to Redford as a result of human generated carbon emissions.

My position is that as an elected official, it is important to continue reading and learning from the latest data, asking questions in the best interest of Redford's constituents, and make long-term determinations and policy positions based on these findings. Our weather has been trending toward warmer average temps in recent years, but there has not been clear evidence that this will cause any acute harm to our residents or infrastructure in the near and medium term of our township. I am unwilling to generalize current trends into either a disparate position of "we are in a climate crisis" or "there is no climate change." I believe we are called to be good stewards of our planet, and there is certainly room for improvement in how we walk that calling out. We must also be clear-eyed and measured in any response we take, avoiding fiscal irresponsibility and the urge to make this an ethical/moral issue when it is truly a policy and cost/benefit issue for our community, region, state, nation, and planet.

PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

Who do you consider the most vulnerable and in need of protection in Redford? The unborn.

Please share how you would like to see these vulnerable persons ensured greater protection in the Redford community. In the summer of 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States nullified the existing precedent from the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision. In the wake of this seismic judicial and political decision, there were a string of vandalisms against facilities that are typically referred to as "Crisis Pregnancy Centers," a term that usually indicates a pro-life clinic to counsel, support, and dissuade women from aborting their unborn children. The center, located in Redford's Downtown Development Authority district, was vandalized by having its windows smashed and graffiti sprayed on the wall. This deeply disturbed me. There are many communities in our nation that have needed/need help to overcome historical discrepancies in health outcomes, legal protections, etc., but but in my lifetime I have never seen the windows smashed or graffiti marked on the facilities that provide services for these groups. I believe the topic of the right to life for the unborn, and the representation and protection of these people who literally cannot speak for themselves, is far and away the group in the greatest need of advocacy and protection in our nation and community. The vandalizing of such facilities should never be endorsed, and even more, should be strongly denounced and investigated when it occurs in Redford Township.

ENGAGING WITH THE FAITH COMMUNITY

Redford has a diverse faith community, many of whom are practicing some form of Christianity and attending one of the local churches. This questionnaire has been developed for these practicing Christians.

Are you regularly engaged with a local church either in Redford or in a nearby city? Yes

ENDORSEMENTS

Please list any organizations or public figures who have given you their endorsement. N/A

CONCLUDING WORDS

In 10 words or less, what do you consider the most pressing need for Redford Township? This brief answer will be included in the printed voter guide. Ensuring our long-term financial obligations are sustainably met.

Feel free to share additional comments to the question above. Attract & retain families, fiscal responsibility for the long-term, and cost-effective enhancements to our parks and greenways are initiatives that are important to me. I believe this will create a strong financial base to support our senior citizens, foster a thriving downtown, and strengthen Redford as an affordable, safe, and lovely place to live and work.