

Candidate for City Council: Kathy Gharst

1. Why are you seeking this public office?

I am seeking public office because it is not only important, but also one's civic duty, to invest personally in the community one lives in. Every community has its positives and negatives, but no one should complain unless they are willing to be an active part of the solution.

As a business owner my employees knew that I was always open to listening to their ideas. However, I made it clear to bring to me viable solutions. Complaining gets us nowhere, while ideas for improvements create progress and develop a healthy culture working together, strong morale and pride of ownership.

Once elected, I intend to listen to the concerns of the community and bring to the table viable ideas that will benefit the community.

2. What do you believe makes you uniquely qualified to serve in this position and most distinguishes you from your opponents?

I am a strong leader and a very motivated person who is gifted with discernment and pragmatism. I also will make decisions that are unpopular, if necessary, without wavering.

I invested both time and money into restoring the iconic Smokey's building. Seeing the building empty was disheartening for everyone. Wanting to make a difference, I forged ahead in faith and bought the building. The best reward is the buzz it has created, the excitement and gratefulness of the entire community has been overwhelming!

I mention this project to show evidence of my willingness to invest not only monetary assets, but hard work for the betterment of Wellsville. I intend to serve with integrity and honesty, and for all those reasons I am uniquely qualified for the position.

3. As a candidate, what are your top three policy issues?

I plan to create forums where I can listen to the concerns, and desires of the voters. It isn't my platform that is important, it's the voices of those whom I represent. Many of my fellow citizens have expressed these concerns:

- Enhancements to our downtown area
- Improvements to both city streets and sidewalks
- Code Enforcements: for example, maintaining orderliness by citing landlords and homeowners for lack of maintenance to properties.
- Develop programs to help the elderly with home improvements and curb appeal.
- Youth programs to help with some of the programs that I've mentioned above.

4. As the city considers future development projects, describe your views on how Wellsville should best manage and balance growth.

I believe what is key is the word "balanced". To a small town with a close-knit community and with such a rich history, growth for growth's sake can ruin towns such as ours.

I witnessed this where I grew up. It appears there was no forethought to what was being torn down or constructed. All character was lost, and it just became another cookie cutter bedroom community.

On the other hand, things that do not grow are not healthy. They become stagnant and non-thriving.

We must take a thoughtful approach, and carefully design a way forward that ensures preservation of our wonderful identity, while providing the growth that's needed to sustain a healthy community.

5. Describe your position on whether proper staffing is in place to handle the growth that is coming to Wellsville; if not, what changes do you suggest?

Let me say that everyone has done a great job considering their workload vs manpower. However, under staffing has created issues with serving the community in an efficient manner.

It goes without saying that with the growth of a community there needs to be a growth in the number of city employees. This will require budget increases. This is where proper oversight is needed to ensure that our hard-earned tax dollars are properly and efficiently spent.

6. City candidates: describe your position on whether a City Manager or similar position would be appropriate for Wellsville or not.

Absolutely, a City Manager is necessary. You cannot successfully run any organization without someone being in charge. As Harry Truman said, "The buck stops here."

This person will be charged with implementing the will of the people and holding those under them accountable.

The result of such a management structure will create a system for accomplishing the goals of the city and maintaining order.