

## **Martin Bauer**

### **1. Please provide a brief biography of yourself.**

I am a first-generation immigrant, born and raised in Augsburg, Germany. I first came to the U.S. to attend graduate school at the University of Notre Dame where I earned a M.Sc. in Mathematics. Notre Dame is also where I met my wife Elizabeth. We've been married for 28 years, 27 of which we've been in Arlington Heights. This is where we raised our 3 boys who are currently aged 17 through 24. All 3 of them went to Our Lady of the Wayside School, followed by Rolling Meadows High School.

Over the years, I've been involved in the community in a multitude of ways. This includes 16 years of serving in various roles with the Boy Scouts, 7 years as Scoutmaster of Troop 161. Then, in the early days of COVID, I established the Live Streaming Ministry at Our Lady of the Wayside to bring church into people's homes. I remain a member of this important ministry that serves the sick and homebound and is particularly appreciated for weddings and funerals for out-of-town friends and family who are unable to travel. Further, I've been an active member with the PADS ministry that serves the community's homeless population, both at Our Lady of the Wayside and, more recently, at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, where I am a member.

Professionally, I'm a pension actuary by training, which means I use my expertise in math, finance and risk analysis to solve complex problems. I worked for Hewitt Associates and then Aon in a variety of roles, ultimately as Senior Vice President of Global Benefits. I now oversee a team of 30 professionals to design and manage retirement, health and welfare benefits for about 100,000 lay and clergy members of the United Methodist Church.

### **2. What are your reasons for running for trustee?**

Arlington Heights is a wonderful community that has been great to me and my family. I think of our village as a rare gem in the greater Chicago area. My wife Elizabeth and I have raised our family here, and I want our children (and the next generation in general) to have the same opportunities and be able to enjoy and afford the same great life in Arlington Heights as we have. Simply put, I want to build on and enhance what's great about Arlington Heights, and I want to avoid falling into any traps that could diminish our community.

### **3. What are the biggest challenges for the village in the next four years from a financial, development, and/or social perspective?**

Currently, the biggest challenge for Arlington Heights is to find the right path forward for some of the bigger development opportunities, with none bigger than Arlington Park. This will require a combination of vision and patience. While the opportunities are significant, so are the risks.

Any large development will require a public-private partnership to collaboratively achieve the best possible outcome. However, the village needs to be vigilant and avoid the potential financial downside of large subsidies being spent in the hopes of economic gains that may or may not materialize. As trustee, I would insist on a full range of economic projections, including potential unfavorable “what if” scenarios, along with detailed analyses on traffic, impact on immediate neighbors as well as other parts of the village, etc. It is also important that we find solutions that benefit the entire community rather than benefit one group at the expense of another.

**4. We will be discussing the possibility of a Bears development in Arlington Heights during our live forum. If the Bears do not relocate to Arlington Heights, how should the village approach the redevelopment of Arlington Park? What would be a good alternative?**

We need to make sure that the Arlington Park property does not sit empty for an extended period of time, but I want us to maintain an open mind about a variety of possible development options rather than insist on a very specific use of this land. I am open to listening to various proposals brought before the village and would support any development that enhances Arlington Heights and the lives of our residents. I could see a mixed-use district that would expand on and complement the existing dining and entertainment options (for as long as it doesn't compete with other parts of the village, principally downtown), but I could also envision other options such as a portion of that property being set aside for other commercial uses to support the village's tax base.

**5. What ideas do you have to keep property taxes paid to the village flat for the next few years?**

One way of thinking of property taxes is as the difference between the village's expenses and the income generated by other revenue sources such as sales tax. The key to keeping property taxes flat is therefore a combination of managing spending and stimulating growth to expand the overall revenue base.

Most of the village's expenses are fixed in that they support necessary core services such as fire and police protection. However, the village can control its spending by saying “no” to well-meaning proposals that aren't truly necessary or that are intended to address needs that can be better met by other parties such as non-profits or local churches.

The revenue side is best expanded by attracting new businesses and stimulating growth for existing businesses. This can be done by fostering a truly business friendly mindset that is designed to serve small businesses as well as large developers. Right now, too many businesses consider Village Hall to be difficult to deal with. The focus for our village government has to be

to support our businesses by making their lives easier and by anticipating and meeting their needs.

**6. What are the greatest public safety challenges facing our community?**

The Arlington Heights police department has done a great job keeping Arlington Heights residents safe, and in my opinion, we do not currently have a significant public safety issue.

However, crime prevention is an ongoing issue that requires constant vigilance. In particular, enhanced police presence in certain hot spots is needed to avoid crime becoming a bigger issue going forward.

Besides police, the fire department also plays an important role in health and safety. The fire department is extremely busy and we have to make sure that staffing levels and equipment are always at a level that can meet the demand. The recent addition of a 5<sup>th</sup> ambulance was the right step, and we need to make sure to stay in front of potential future increases in demand as the village develops.

**7. Arlington Alfresco is excellent but only runs for a few months. What are your ideas for turning downtown into a year-round destination?**

Arlington Alfresco is indeed one of the best enhancements to have come to Arlington Heights in recent years. At its core, Alfresco meets a demand for local or regional entertainment that is easily accessible.

I could imagine a similar recipe being applied year-round. This might involve pursuing new indoor/outdoor attractions. Some ideas (subject to additional vetting) might include:

- Leveraging existing strengths such as the numerous boutiques and art stores for new festivals or themed weekend events.
- Expanding the duration of the Alfresco season by incorporating some covered “semi-outdoor” seating (maybe under high glass structures?) in courtyards, alleys or the yet to be developed Arlington 425 project.
- Attracting more live music acts to the local restaurants and bars, building on what is already in place at Hey Nonny, the Big Shot Piano Lounge, Peggy Kinnane’s, etc.

**8. Given the significant changes between the previous and current administration at the national level, what are the implications for Arlington Heights that may require action from our Board or adjustments from our staff?**

Changes in administrations at the national level happen regularly. They sometimes bring significant changes in policy direction that can understandably be unsettling for some residents. However, those changes generally do not require explicit action from village staff or the Board of Trustees. That said, both village staff and the Board of Trustees should be focused on the common good of our community and its residents, and it might be suitable to issue some sort of proclamation that the Board of Trustees is united in pursuing such common good and the welfare of all residents.

However, I would be opposed to the village taking any action that might suggest a particular partisan leaning.

**9. Do you have any potential personal or professional conflicts, real or reasonably perceived, that may arise if you were elected? How would you address those conflicts?**

No.

**10. If you could change one major challenge facing Arlington Heights—something that seems difficult or even impossible to solve under current circumstances—what would it be? How would addressing this issue significantly improve our town?**

Allow me to dream for a moment. Right now, downtown is cut in half by the train track, which creates a significant split between North and South. Ever since we moved to Arlington Heights, I've been dreaming of lowering the train track (and maybe even Northwest Highway), covering the area and using the newly available space for a park and development that truly unifies and brings downtown together. This would allow for an expansion of downtown and make Arlington Heights even more of a regional destination than it is today. I've seen similar transformations happen in my native Europe, but I recognize that it would be tall order for Arlington Heights under the current circumstances.

## James "Jim" Bertucci

### 1. Please provide a brief biography of yourself.

- Age 65, 2 adult children and 2 grandchildren
- Lived in Arlington Heights since 1985 (40 Years)
- Professionally, in business for 37 years as a Financial and Investment Advisor
- The only incumbent running for Village Trustee out of the 8 candidates
- The experience to provide stability to the newly formed board
- 35 plus years of community service
- Current Arlington Heights Village Trustee
- Past Board President of the Arlington Heights Chamber of Commerce
- Past Board President of the Arlington Heights Board of Library Trustees
- Past Board President of the Arlington Heights Rotary Club
- Past Board President of the Arlington Heights Crime Stoppers
- Past Board Vice President of the Arlington Heights Historical Society
- Past Board Vice President of the Performing Arts at Metropolis Board
- Chairman of the Arlington Heights Mayor's Prayer Breakfast Committee

### 2. What are your reasons for running for trustee?

I love Arlington Heights and am deeply committed to keeping our Village a great place to live, work, and enjoy life. As a Trustee, I want to use my time, skills, and experience to help our community grow and thrive. Arlington Heights has incredible opportunities ahead, and I'm dedicated to assessing and addressing them to ensure a bright future for all. My goal is to keep our Village moving forward while preserving the qualities that make it such a wonderful place.

### 3. What are the biggest challenges for the village in the next four years from a financial, development, and/or social perspective?

**Financial:** Arlington Heights has a strong track record of responsible financial management and maintaining that stability will remain a top priority. The challenge lies in continuing to limit or avoid tax levy increases, as has been successfully done over the past six years. However, with prudent fiscal planning, healthy reserves, and a commitment from the Board to keeping taxes reasonable, I am confident that our Village's financial health will remain strong and sustainable.

**Development:** Ensuring continued, balanced development over the next four years will be both a challenge and an opportunity. The redevelopment of the old Arlington Park property will be a cornerstone for growth, bringing new possibilities to our community. Additionally, we must support smart development in the south corridor and downtown areas, ensuring that Arlington Heights remains an attractive and thriving place for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

**Social:** Keeping Arlington Heights a safe, vibrant, and welcoming community will require ongoing collaboration between residents, businesses, and local government. Our downtown area is already a hub of activity, and it must not only maintain its appeal but also evolve with new enhancements. By fostering a strong sense of community and encouraging social opportunities across the Village, we can ensure Arlington Heights continues to be a place where people love to live, work, and connect.

**4. We will be discussing the possibility of a Bears development in Arlington Heights during our live forum. If the Bears do not relocate to Arlington Heights, how should the village approach the redevelopment of Arlington Park? What would be a good alternative?**

If the Bears choose not to develop their stadium at the old Arlington Park property, the site remains a premier location with immense potential for a transformative, multi-purpose development. For decades, Arlington Park was a regional destination, and with its prime location and dedicated train stop, it can continue to be a major economic and community asset.

A well-planned mixed-use development could attract businesses, create jobs, and generate significant tax revenue, all while enhancing the quality of life for Arlington Heights residents. The focus should be on growth that complements our Village's character and strengthens our local economy. Whether through a combination of commercial, residential, entertainment, or recreational spaces, this property offers an unparalleled opportunity to bring new energy and investment to the area—while ensuring that downtown Arlington Heights remains a thriving, vibrant hub.

**5. What ideas do you have to keep property taxes paid to the village flat for the next few years?**

Arlington Heights has maintained a strong and stable financial position, delivering essential services—such as public safety, utilities, and infrastructure—while exercising responsible fiscal management. The Village Board and staff have done an excellent job keeping property tax increases minimal over the past five years, with no increase for several years and only a modest 2.49% adjustment this year.

To keep property taxes flat or limit future increases, the Board must remain disciplined in approving budgets that balance high-quality services with cost efficiency. This requires a strategic focus on controlling expenses and exploring innovative ways to generate additional revenue without raising tax rates.

One key approach is fostering economic development to increase taxable sales, driving local business growth, and strengthening the revenue base. However, it is crucial to avoid increasing the sales tax percentage, as that could discourage consumer spending. We should also seek out partnerships and grant opportunities to help offset costs and ensure taxpayer dollars are used as effectively as possible.

Additionally, maintaining strong financial reserves will give the Village the flexibility to navigate short-term fiscal challenges without resorting to significant tax increases. By operating efficiently, encouraging responsible growth, and maximizing revenue from

taxable sources, we can keep property taxes stable while continuing to provide the high-quality services and amenities our residents expect and deserve.

**6. What are the greatest public safety challenges facing our community?**

While Arlington Heights is widely regarded as a safe community, public safety requires ongoing attention and a proactive approach. Crime prevention is not just the responsibility of the police, it is a collaborative effort involving the Village Board, staff, businesses, and residents.

One of the most pressing public safety challenges is addressing the problem motels that attract crime and disruptive behavior. I have been a strong advocate for cleaning up these establishments, working closely with law enforcement to understand the issues firsthand through police ride-alongs. I have also pushed for and supported a tough ordinance to ensure these motels are held accountable and no longer serve as hotspots for criminal activity.

Another growing concern is organized retail crime, which has impacted businesses nationwide. The Board recently passed an ordinance to strengthen law enforcement's ability to arrest and prosecute those engaged in these crimes, reinforcing our commitment to protecting local businesses and maintaining a safe shopping environment.

Beyond these specific issues, I remain dedicated to working alongside our police and Village staff to enhance public safety efforts. This includes ensuring our police department is fully staffed with top-tier officers and equipped with the resources necessary to handle emerging challenges. By taking a proactive, strategic approach, we can keep Arlington Heights a safe and thriving community for all.

**7. Arlington Alfresco is excellent but only runs for a few months. What are your ideas for turning downtown into a year-round destination?**

Arlington Alfresco is a fantastic initiative, but to truly transform downtown Arlington Heights into a vibrant, year-round destination, we need to creatively embrace the challenges posed by our harsh winters. Here are some ideas that could help:

**Outdoor Winter Activities:**

- Winter Markets and Pop
- Ice Skating Rink
- Winter Light Displays
- Winter Festivals

**Indoor Activities & Experiences:**

- Business-Led Events
- Themed Events & Seasonal Menus
- Indoor Art Installations and Exhibits

**Village Marketing Efforts:**

- **Seasonal Promotion Campaigns**
- **Collaborative Event Calendar**
- **Community Collaboration**

While the cold winter months present a challenge, with the right mix of outdoor fun and indoor warmth, Arlington Heights can thrive as a destination that brings people together year-round! By the way...as many know, I am a resident of downtown Arlington Heights and have a personal interest in downtown's year-round success and vibrance.

**8. Given the significant changes between the previous and current administration at the national level, what are the implications for Arlington Heights that may require action from our Board or adjustments from our staff?**

The significant changes at the national level could affect Arlington Heights in various ways. The Board and staff should stay observant of any service gaps caused by shifts in federal policies, especially regarding funding or new unfunded mandates that could impact the budget. It will be important to ensure coordination across Village, Township, County, and State services to meet community needs. Additionally, national policy changes in areas like public health, safety, or economic development could affect local businesses and vulnerable residents. Staying proactive, flexible, and ready to adjust to these changes will be crucial for the community.

**9. Do you have any potential personal or professional conflicts, real or reasonably perceived, that may arise if you were elected? How would you address those conflicts?**

No.

**10. If you could change one major challenge facing Arlington Heights—something that seems difficult or even impossible to solve under current circumstances—what would it be? How would addressing this issue significantly improve our town?**

One major challenge facing Arlington Heights is its long and narrow geography, which makes it difficult to connect the northern, central, and southern areas of the village. Addressing this challenge—through improved marketing strategies and enhanced transportation options—could significantly improve the town by creating a more cohesive, unified community.

By better linking these areas, we could drive more business across the entire village, encouraging residents and visitors to explore different parts of Arlington Heights. A stronger sense of inclusivity would emerge, making all neighborhoods feel more interconnected, while fostering a shared community identity. Enhanced transportation options, such as better public transit routes or improved walkability, could make it easier for people to travel throughout the village. This would not only boost local businesses but also help create a more vibrant, accessible, and connected community for everyone.



## Colin Gilbert

1. I am a proud graduate of John Hersey High School. After high school, I attended the University of Illinois, where I earned a bachelor's degree in speech communication with minors in English and Theatre. I then went on to earn my law degree from Chicago-Kent College of Law, building a career as a real estate attorney. In addition to my legal career, I spent several years as the owner of Tuscan Market and Wine Shop in downtown Arlington Heights, gaining firsthand experience in running a small business and understanding the challenges and opportunities facing our local business community. I also had the honor of serving as the president of the Arlington Heights Chamber of Commerce, where I worked to support local businesses and strengthen our village's economic growth. My commitment to Arlington Heights extends beyond my professional life—I have been actively involved in the community for years. I currently serve as a board member of Arlington Heights Youth Athletic Association and as the director of Arlington Cardinals Travel Baseball, helping to provide opportunities for local youth through sports. Previously, I served as a Special Events Commissioner for the Village of Arlington Heights and as a board member of Gerry's Café, both roles that allowed me to contribute to making our village a vibrant and welcoming place. With my background in law, business, and community service, I am committed to ensuring Arlington Heights continues to thrive while preserving the qualities that make it such a great place to live, work, and raise a family.
2. I am running for Village Trustee because I believe in giving back to the community that has shaped me. I have a strong sense of community, and now, as I raise my own family in Arlington Heights, I am committed to ensuring that Arlington Heights remains a thriving, welcoming place for generations to come. Arlington Heights deserves strong, thoughtful leadership that prioritizes the needs of its residents, fosters responsible development, and maintains the character that makes our village special. I want to ensure that families continue to benefit from excellent schools, safe neighborhoods, and a vibrant local economy. With a focus on transparency, accountability, and smart decision-making, I will work to strengthen our local government's relationship with the people it serves. Arlington Heights is a remarkable place to live, and I am dedicated to protecting its future by advocating for responsible policies that balance growth with maintaining our community's unique identity. I am ready to bring a thoughtful, community-first approach to leadership, and I look forward to working with residents to shape the future of our village.
3. Arlington Heights is at a pivotal moment, facing both opportunities and challenges as it navigates new development and the need to invest in aging infrastructure. The potential redevelopment of key sites, including the former Arlington Park property, presents a chance to bring economic growth, new jobs, and enhanced amenities to the village. However, managing this growth in a way that aligns with the character and long-term vision of the community will require careful planning. Large-scale projects must be

approached with transparency and fiscal responsibility to ensure they provide real benefits to residents without burdening taxpayers or straining existing resources. At the same time, Arlington Heights must address the reality of aging infrastructure, from roads and public facilities to water and sewer systems. As the village continues to grow, maintaining and upgrading these essential services will be critical to preserving the high quality of life that residents expect. Strategic investment will be necessary to modernize infrastructure while balancing costs in a way that is fair and sustainable. Ensuring that these improvements keep pace with development will require strong leadership and a commitment to long-term planning rather than short-term fixes. With growth comes the challenge of maintaining a sense of community, ensuring that new developments enhance rather than overshadow the character of Arlington Heights. Thoughtful leadership will be essential to guide these changes while keeping the needs of residents at the forefront. By fostering responsible development and making smart investments in infrastructure, the village can position itself for a strong and vibrant future

4. If the Chicago Bears ultimately decide not to relocate to Arlington Heights, and even if they do not, the village has a unique opportunity to reimagine the Arlington Park property in a way that benefits residents, enhances the local economy, and maintains the character of the community. A well-balanced redevelopment plan should focus on creating a multi-use destination that blends sports, entertainment, and residential spaces while preserving open areas for public enjoyment. A premier sports complex could serve as the centerpiece of the redevelopment, offering facilities for youth and amateur sports, indoor training centers, and multi-use fields that attract tournaments and events from across the Country. This type of development would not only provide recreational opportunities for local families but also generate economic activity by bringing in visitors and supporting local businesses. Complementing this, an outdoor music venue could serve as a cultural hub and power partner for the Metropolis Performing Arts Center, hosting concerts, festivals, and community events. A thoughtfully designed venue would enhance Arlington Heights' reputation as a destination for live entertainment while offering residents a vibrant gathering space. To ensure the development is well-integrated into the community, a small housing element could be incorporated, focusing on high-quality townhomes or apartments that provide modern living options without overwhelming the area with dense residential expansion. This mix of uses would create an active, inviting space while maintaining the balance between economic growth and the village's unique character. By taking a strategic and resident-focused approach to redeveloping Arlington Park, the village can turn the site into a dynamic community asset that enhances quality of life and contributes to the long-term success of Arlington Heights.
5. Keeping property taxes flat in Arlington Heights while maintaining high-quality services will require a combination of strategic economic growth, responsible budgeting, and creative revenue generation. One approach is to focus on attracting new businesses and commercial developments that expand the tax base without placing additional financial pressure on homeowners. Encouraging mixed-use developments and retail hubs can

generate new sales tax and business revenue, helping to offset the need for property tax increases. Another key strategy is to prioritize fiscal responsibility within the village budget by identifying efficiencies and cost-saving measures. Regularly reviewing expenditures, streamlining operations, and exploring shared service agreements with neighboring municipalities could reduce costs while maintaining essential services. Exploring alternative revenue sources, such as grants, public-private partnerships, and carefully structured user fees for certain services, can help bridge funding gaps without raising property taxes. Thoughtful development of Arlington Park—whether through a sports complex, entertainment venue, or mixed-use space—could provide a significant boost in revenue through sales taxes, event fees, and tourism spending. By fostering smart economic growth and responsible financial planning, Arlington Heights can work toward keeping property taxes stable while ensuring the Village continues to thrive.

6. As Arlington Heights continues to grow and attract new development, ensuring that the police and fire departments have the resources necessary to keep the community safe is a top priority. With potential large-scale projects, increased commercial activity, and a steadily growing population, the demands on public safety services will only continue to rise. Providing additional funding to these departments is essential to maintaining quick response times, enhancing community policing efforts, and ensuring that first responders have the training, equipment, and staffing levels needed to meet evolving challenges. For the police department, increased funding can support initiatives such as improved technology for crime prevention, enhanced mental health crisis response, and expanded community outreach programs. As the village grows, maintaining a strong police presence in both residential and commercial areas will be key to preserving Arlington Heights' reputation as a safe and welcoming community. Investments in modernized equipment and additional personnel can help the department stay ahead of public safety needs while fostering stronger relationships between law enforcement and residents. The fire department also faces increasing demands, particularly with the expansion of high-density developments and aging infrastructure that may require more complex emergency responses. Additional funding can ensure that fire stations are properly staffed, emergency medical services are well-equipped, and training programs are continually updated to address new challenges. Maintaining high standards for fire and rescue operations is critical to protecting both residents and businesses.
7. Downtown Arlington Heights is already a thriving, year-round destination, offering a vibrant mix of restaurants, shops, and entertainment. Arlington Alfresco has been a fantastic way to enhance this energy during the summer months. It provides a unique draw at a time when business can traditionally slow down, helping to support local establishments and reinforce the downtown's appeal as a lively, welcoming destination. Beyond Alfresco, the Metropolis Performing Arts Centre plays a key role in keeping downtown active throughout the year. With a full schedule of live performances, concerts, and theatrical productions, Metropolis provides a cultural anchor that attracts visitors regardless of the season. The village can build on this by coordinating promotions

and events that pair downtown dining and shopping with Metropolis shows, creating a seamless entertainment experience for residents and visitors alike. To further maintain momentum beyond the summer months, creative use of outdoor heating and enclosed patios could extend the outdoor dining experience well into the cooler months. With a strong foundation already in place, including the year-round programming at Metropolis, Arlington Heights can continue to support its downtown businesses while reinforcing the area as a dynamic hub of activity no matter the time of year.

8. Significant changes at the national level, particularly in economic and fiscal policy, have direct implications for Arlington Heights, especially given the financial challenges facing Illinois and local municipalities. With federal and state funding increasingly strained, the Village Board and staff must be proactive in ensuring that Arlington Heights can continue to provide essential services and maintain infrastructure without relying on outside financial support. One major area of concern is infrastructure funding. If state and federal dollars become limited for road improvements, water and sewer upgrades, and public facilities, the village may need to explore alternative revenue sources or adjust budget priorities to ensure critical projects are completed. Public safety funding is another key issue. If state and federal resources for police and fire departments become more limited, Arlington Heights must ensure that these departments remain fully staffed, well-equipped, and prepared to meet the growing needs of the community.
9. I have no conflicts that I am currently aware of. In the event of a conflict, I would need to recuse myself from any votes arising out of the conflict.
10. A major challenge for Arlington Heights is ensuring the full redevelopment of Arlington Park as quickly as possible so the village can immediately benefit from new tax revenue, jobs, and entertainment options. Delays in zoning, infrastructure, and negotiations often slow large projects, but by streamlining approvals, coordinating infrastructure upgrades, and fostering public-private partnerships, the village can keep development on track. A completed Arlington Park will boost the local economy, could fund public services without raising taxes, and enhance Arlington Heights as a top destination, turning a challenge into a major opportunity for growth and community enrichment.

## **Michele Hunter**

### **1. Please provide a brief biography of yourself.**

I have practiced law for over 20 years in the private and public sector. Part of my legal background includes cases involving municipal law and local governance. I also have a small business background with a family gift shop/coffee cafe that is still in operation after 45 years. I have published a children's book available at Barnes & Noble and Amazon (with a second children's book approved for publishing). I have had two book signings at local businesses in Arlington Heights and have donated the majority of the proceeds to children's causes, shelters, and libraries. As a 15-year resident of Arlington Heights, I'm actively involved in the community at the American Legion, Rotary, animal shelters, and church.

### **2. What are your reasons for running for trustee?**

I'm running to represent the voice of the residents and ensure that their will is reflected. My legal and small business background make me uniquely qualified to serve as a trustee.

### **3. What are the biggest challenges for the village in the next four years from a financial, development, and/or social perspective?**

Economic development for both residents and businesses is a big challenge in Arlington Heights given the high taxes. Arlington Heights needs to attract residents and businesses rather than deter growth.

### **4. We will be discussing the possibility of a Bears development in Arlington Heights during our live forum. If the Bears do not relocate to Arlington Heights, how should the village approach the redevelopment of Arlington Park? What would be a good alternative?**

I support the continued zoning of Arlington Park as commercial and would consider the economic impact statements of any potential developers.

### **5. What ideas do you have to keep property taxes paid to the village flat for the next few years?**

The Village has maintained a 0% tax levy for five years in a row due to sales taxes and income taxes. Now, the 2025 budget contains a 2.46 levy increase. With my business background, I support a budget that keeps property taxes flat and keeps any unnecessary spending down.

### **6. What are the greatest public safety challenges facing our community?**

Conversations with local police officers indicate that instances of theft and other crimes are on the rise. Also, there is an increased demand on the fire department with mental health calls.

### **7. Arlington Alfresco is excellent but only runs for a few months. What are your ideas for turning downtown into a year-round destination?**

The charm of Arlington Alfresco is a draw and boon for the community. I would talk to local businesses and consider their proposals for extending it beyond the current state. One common complaint from local businesses is that the two-hour parking restrictions hurt patrons' ability to shop and eat and take advantage of all the amenities the Village has to offer.

**8. Given the significant changes between the previous and current administration at the national level, what are the implications for Arlington Heights that may require action from our Board or adjustments from our staff?**

Regardless of the administration at the national level, transparency, accountability, and integrity at the local level government is what builds trust in the residents.

**9. Do you have any potential personal or professional conflicts, real or reasonably perceived, that may arise if you were elected? How would you address those conflicts?**

No.

**10. If you could change one major challenge facing Arlington Heights—something that seems difficult or even impossible to solve under current circumstances—what would it be? How would addressing this issue significantly improve our town?**

I would support addressing any high-crime locations, such as hotels or other areas, that the police or fire department is faced with.

## **Anargyros "Argie" Karafotias**

### **1. Please provide a brief biography of yourself.**

I am 39. I have lived in Arlington Heights for ten years.

I have two sons, Patrick and Matthew. Patrick is thirteen years old and is active in football and Boy Scouts. Matthew is eleven years old and participates in soccer and Boy Scouts. They both attend South Middle School. I am a restaurant owner. I own and manage Golden Brunch in Arlington Heights on 31 East Golf Road Arlington Heights. I immigrated to the United States fifteen years ago. I attended school and served in the Army in Greece. When I came to the United States I attended Harper College.

### **2. What are your reasons for running for trustee?**

I am running to give back to a community that has given so much to me and my family. I will prioritize the safety of our residents, support our schools, and contribute to the ongoing development of a community that I am proud to call home. Ensuring public safety is essential, especially in light of our community's increasing population. We are fortunate to have a dedicated team of police officers and first responders, and it is imperative that we provide them with the necessary resources and support to continue safeguarding our community. Communities are having trouble attracting and retaining officers in the Chicago area, and we need to make sure our department is supported to attract candidates. Our school system is recognized as one of the best, and it is crucial that we maintain robust support for our school districts to meet the evolving needs of our students. As a local business owner, I am experienced in making decisions aimed at achieving mutual benefits for all stakeholders involved.

### **3. What are the biggest challenges for the village in the next four years from a financial, development, and/or social perspective?**

The primary challenge currently facing our village is the future redevelopment of the Arlington Park property. As a founding member of Touchdown Arlington Heights, a grassroots initiative aimed at facilitating dialogue between all stakeholders and the Chicago Bears, I want to clarify that encouraging continued dialogue does not imply support for any specific development by the Bears. Any future development, whether it involves the Bears or not, must be thoughtfully designed, transparent, and beneficial to our community. I will continue to foster open communication to ensure everyone's concerns are heard and addressed. The redevelopment necessitates infrastructure improvements and increased services by our first responders. For instance, during my recent evening and midnight shift ride-alongs with the police department, I observed the need for an increased police presence to ensure the safety of all residents. It is also essential that the judicial system holds accountable those individuals who are complicit in or ignore criminal activities. Arlington Heights is a safe community with a great

reputation, and we must work together to maintain and enhance that safety. The most pressing infrastructure projects that need to be addressed right now are the lead pipe replacement program and the enhanced water main replacement program. Looking ahead, a crucial future infrastructure project will involve the redevelopment of the Arlington Park property. While the future of Arlington Park remains uncertain, any redevelopment will require a private/public partnership to enhance the necessary infrastructure for such development.

The lead pipe replacement program has received some funding from the general fund surplus, and staff is applying for grants from the State and Federal Environmental Protection Agencies, while also evaluating other grant opportunities to ensure the safety and health of our residents. The water main replacement program has been included in the annual budget process. There are several options to consider for the necessary infrastructure improvements at the Arlington Park property. I am open to discussing all options in a collaborative and transparent manner.

- 4. We will be discussing the possibility of a Bears development in Arlington Heights during our live forum. If the Bears do not relocate to Arlington Heights, how should the village approach the redevelopment of Arlington Park? What would be a good alternative?**

Regardless of the Bears' decision, it is crucial that we recognize the significant opportunity presented by the former Arlington Park property. We should apply consistent criteria to any prospective development: it must reflect the highest and best use of the property while delivering financial benefits to our residents. The highest and best use should include revenue-generating opportunities to reduce our reliance on future real estate tax levies.

- 5. What ideas do you have to keep property taxes paid to the village flat for the next few years?**

The Village's financial position is currently robust. Decisions made by the Board and staff over the past decade have allowed for only one property tax levy increase in the last five years. Prudent and thoughtful financial planning, particularly through enhancing sales tax revenue, has made us less reliant on property taxes. Moving forward, our primary spending priorities should focus on enhancing public infrastructure and recruiting the very best for our police and fire services. It is essential that we assess our existing community projects to evaluate their effectiveness and impact on the community.

- 6. What are the greatest public safety challenges facing our community?**

All new developments necessitate infrastructure improvements and increased services by our first responders. For instance, during my two recent evening and midnight shift ride-along with the police department, I observed the need for an increased police presence to ensure the safety of all residents. It is also essential that the judicial system holds accountable those individuals who are complicit in



or ignore criminal activities. Arlington Heights is a safe community with a great reputation, and we must work together to maintain and enhance that safety.

**7. Arlington Alfresco is excellent but only runs for a few months. What are your ideas for turning downtown into a year-round destination?**

I propose the formation of a focus group consisting of residents from various areas of Arlington Heights. The objective of this group would be to discuss community needs and subsequently present their findings to the board. Additionally, I propose establishing a safer alfresco dining experience in our downtown area. This initiative would include the implementation of automatic barriers designed to provide safe access to residents/patrons and delivery trucks. Finally, increasing winter themed events such as ice sculpture making, and ice skating rinks.

**8. Given the significant changes between the previous and current administration at the national level, what are the implications for Arlington Heights that may require action from our Board or adjustments from our staff?**

Our Village staff has kept the Village safe from any implications with any administration. I am positive that if something comes our way, staff and the Board will do everything to protect our Residents and Village.

**9. Do you have any potential personal or professional conflicts, real or reasonably perceived, that may arise if you were elected? How would you address those conflicts?**

As a part of my business, I hold a liquor license. If elected I would recuse myself from any votes regarding liquor license.

**10. If you could change one major challenge facing Arlington Heights—something that seems difficult or even impossible to solve under current circumstances—what would it be? How would addressing this issue significantly improve our town?**

I propose the formation of a focus group consisting of residents from various areas of Arlington Heights. The objective of this group would be to discuss community needs and subsequently present their findings to the board. This will help to connect the North, South and Downtown. Which would be for the growth and obvious good of the Village.

## **Bill Manganaro**

### **1. Please provide a brief biography of yourself.**

My experience as a firefighter and EMT in rural Colorado left me with a passion for healthcare and service. These experiences led me to an Electrical Engineering degree and a career developing life-saving medical equipment. After earning dual business-focused master's degrees, I relocated briefly to New Jersey, expanding my scope to include the marketing, management and servicing of these products.

I began working for Baxter Healthcare in 2006, which led our family to settle in Arlington Heights. We were drawn by its great schools, parks and overall quality of life. In 2018 I completed a series of integrated and digital marketing certificates and began working at Health Care Service Corporation integrating Digital Health programs into its insurance plans. In the same year, I began volunteering at the Matter Health tech incubator in Chicago. In this role, I mentor health-tech startups, helping them accelerate development, approval and market entry for the next generation of healthcare products and services.

I currently lead a team of healthcare analysts dedicated to many of largest self-insured employer groups in the Chicago area. After salaries, health insurance is the highest cost area for businesses. We help our clients understand health plan performance, and advise on meeting their future goals, which may focus on cost, population health, recruitment and retention, etc.

### **2. What are your reasons for running for trustee?**

I'm running because I love this town! The longer I live here, the more convinced I am that my background and skillset align with the Village's needs as it moves into the second quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

I am the only candidate in the race with emergency services experience. This background gives me a unique understanding of what we ask of our first responders and the risks they take every day to keep us safe. These services make up the majority of the Village budget and are the most visible and essential activities of our Village government. No one can support our Fire and Police Departments the way I can.

In addition, my background in engineering and technology, my advanced business degrees and years of leadership in the healthcare industry combine to give me an informed and valuable perspective that will be vital to Village in facing the issues that are so important to our future.

### **3. What are the biggest challenges for the village in the next four years from a financial, development, and/or social perspective?**

One of these issues is unquestionably Arlington Park development. In the next four years I believe we'll know whether the Bears will build a stadium here. This will be a turning point for the Village's future. The character of Arlington Heights will be markedly different for decades to come depending on whether or not the team plays here. Should the Bears come, there will be

tremendous impacts: traffic, public safety, and potential competition of a new entertainment district with our current Downtown to name a few.

Infrastructure presents another set of challenges. We are under an unfunded state mandate to replace lead service lines. We need to accelerate and prioritize replacement of aging water mains to reduce the risk of water main breaks. We need to consider capital expenditures like expanded parking for the Downtown area. Meeting all our infrastructure needs will be a financial challenge.

Third is transportation. Our current system works well to get between Arlington Heights and downtown Chicago but fails when it comes to moving people within the Village and across the Northwest Suburbs. One of the Village's largest employers, Northwest Community Hospital, has stated that it needs better public transit to get its employees to work. Developing a workable transportation system will require significant intergovernmental and interagency cooperation, which can be beyond challenging.

**4. We will be discussing the possibility of a Bears development in Arlington Heights during our live forum. If the Bears do not relocate to Arlington Heights, how should the village approach the redevelopment of Arlington Park? What would be a good alternative?**

If the Bears don't come, this 326-acre parcel is a literal greenfield opportunity that could benefit the Village in many ways. The property could be developed into housing at every price point. One is what I call "workable housing," meaning housing that people who work in the Village can afford. We have challenges recruiting for Village staff positions due to the cost of housing. Many seniors who want to age in place can't because the people they need for in-home services can't afford to live nearby.

Senior-friendly housing is another opportunity: smaller, one-story homes at a price that lets them stay in Arlington Heights. This would also allow turnover of existing larger homes to new residents who want everything this Village has to offer.

The property is spacious and has well-defined borders, so development would have less impact on surrounding neighborhoods. A mix of high density and single-family homes would provide diversification of the Village's housing stock. Any such residential development would require increased business development. The Board should work with developers to evaluate zoning opportunities and plans to optimize early stages of this development, taking input from residents at every step.

**5. What ideas do you have to keep property taxes paid to the village flat for the next few years?**

Always buy Arlington is my idea for an initiative that can help. Whenever possible, I buy goods and services in the Village. This keeps taxes, wages and profits close to home. As I canvass neighborhoods and talk with residents, I have found that many people share this practice, and

most respond well to the idea. Everyone in village can take part. This program can build community while it expands our tax base. It also communicates to business owners, or those looking to start a business, that Arlington Heights is eager to welcome and support them. As Trustee I would advocate for a Village-wide educational and promotional program to formalize this initiative.

The increase in the 2025 levy resulted from a combination of slower than expected sales tax receipts and needed expenses – most notably a 5<sup>th</sup> ambulance. To avoid increasing property taxes we must generate more economic activity in the Village. We need to reimagine how we attract new businesses to fill vacancies in existing commercial spaces. A current trend to convert vacant retail space for experiential use is a wave we should ride. The recent approval of Urban Air is a good example of just that. Pickleball has become very popular, and indoor courts with a surrounding social atmosphere could keep people on site year-round. There are numerous other possibilities.

#### **6. What are the greatest public safety challenges facing our community?**

Village Manager Recklaus presented Arlington Heights Police Department data during his Village Update at Arlington Heights Memorial Library in 2024. The evidence shows that crime has stabilized at roughly pre-pandemic levels and is much lower than it was in the '80s or 90s. Certain property crimes, notably catalytic converter thefts, are on the increase.

I see infrastructure as a public safety issue. The recent flooding and drinking water emergency in Skokie due to a main break is a clear example of the kind of risk we face. It demonstrates the importance of continued funding of infrastructure maintenance and the need to accelerate replacement of the Village's aging water mains. Flooding due to rainwater runoff is also a threat to property and public safety that can be addressed through planning and infrastructure development.

#### **7. Arlington Alfresco is excellent but only runs for a few months. What are your ideas for turning downtown into a year-round destination?**

We can begin by extending Al Fresco. For decades, western mountain resort towns have kept outdoor dining facilities open for a far longer season than we currently run in Arlington Heights. The Village and Chamber of Commerce could develop and promote year-round festivals and activities to extend the current summer busy season. The Metropolis Performing Arts Center can help anchor these, as could redevelopment of vacant Downtown commercial space, like the former Arlington Theater.

One possible solution: we have local talent! Music schools like School of Rock, Arlington School of Music and Breaking Grounds in Music provide not just training but develop local bands. Creating a venue for these businesses to show off their students by giving them a place to perform could be a regular feature of Downtown life. The surrounding space could be used much as it had been with the theater: concessions, a coffee or drinks bar, etc.

**8. Given the significant changes between the previous and current administration at the national level, what are the implications for Arlington Heights that may require action from our Board or adjustments from our staff?**

The Village relies in part on federal funding in its capital improvement plan. This is the first place we'll have to consider in contingency planning. Loss of funds would require a review of plan timelines and priorities. Our school districts receive a portion of their funding from the Department of Education. Its dissolution could knock a hole in school budgets, leaving districts to increase their tax levy or cut services. The ripple effect could lower our property values.

**9. Do you have any potential personal or professional conflicts, real or reasonably perceived, that may arise if you were elected? How would you address those conflicts?**

I have no such personal conflicts. I work for Health Care Service Corporation, which was recognized by Ethisphere as one of the world's most ethical companies for the 9<sup>th</sup> time in 2024. Several of our employees currently also serve on municipal government boards. Because HCSC provides health insurance, it requires such employees to sign a binding agreement to recuse themselves from matters involving health insurance as a condition of their employment. Since the Village Board is not involved in decisions about the selection of insurance carriers, this would have no impact on my ability to serve on the Board.

**10. If you could change one major challenge facing Arlington Heights—something that seems difficult or even impossible to solve under current circumstances—what would it be? How would addressing this issue significantly improve our town?**

The burden of increasing property taxes, not just the Village Share, but across all taxing authorities, is the major problem that seems difficult or impossible to solve. While we can fight to hold down the Village's share, the entire system needs reform. Illinois' current system is complex, convoluted, and impossible for the average person to understand. It is frustrating in the extreme.

To get real reform and lower our property taxes would require the State to take action. This seems unlikely given current budget challenges and the uncertainty of federal funding. Moreover, because of the property tax classification system in Cook County (the only Illinois county with such a classification system), businesses throughout Arlington Heights bear an even heavier property tax burden than individual homeowners.

## **Carina Santa Marina**

**1. Please provide a brief biography of yourself.** Carina H. Santa Maria is a dedicated community advocate and nonprofit leader with a career focused on improving lives, building connections, and addressing complex challenges. She currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of Shelter, Inc., where she oversees critical programs supporting children and families in crisis. Carina's expertise lies in identifying gaps in community services and developing innovative solutions to meet those needs. One of her most impactful achievements includes leading the creation of Illinois' first DCFS-approved home for victims of child trafficking, a project that reflects her commitment to serving vulnerable populations with dignity and care. With extensive experience managing complex budgets, negotiating large government contracts, and leading high-impact teams, Carina is deeply engaged in advocacy, education, and policy work. She serves as an Adjunct Professor in the MSW program at Dominican University, mentoring future social workers; a member of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council, working to improve systems for children in foster care across Illinois; and a member of the Cook County Child Death Review Committee, contributing to efforts aimed at preventing tragedies affecting vulnerable children. Carina is also a co-founder of V.O.C.A.L. of Arlington Heights (Voices of Community, Acceptance & Love), a nonpartisan community group dedicated to fostering tolerance, diversity, and inclusion. Carina's leadership is rooted in compassion, equity, and a deep commitment to collaborative problem-solving. She brings a unique combination of strategic vision, financial expertise, and a passion for community engagement to all of her work.

**2. What are your reasons for running for trustee?** I am running for Village Trustee because I am deeply committed to building an inclusive, thriving, and sustainable community in Arlington Heights. As a first-generation American, the daughter of immigrants, and a social worker, I bring a unique perspective that reflects the diverse experiences of our residents. My passion for serving others has been at the core of my career and volunteer work, and I am eager to bring that same dedication to the Village Board. Arlington Heights is a wonderful place to live, and I want to ensure it continues to grow in ways that benefits all residents. My campaign focuses on fostering smart development that balances economic growth with preserving our village's charm, supporting local businesses, and ensuring fiscal responsibility. Additionally, I am committed to advocating for affordable housing options, improving access to resources for families, and prioritizing public safety while fostering a sense of unity among neighbors. I believe the theme of my campaign, "It Takes a Village," perfectly captures my belief that when we work together as a community, we can create meaningful change. Serving as trustee would allow me to use my experience in leadership, advocacy, and collaboration to amplify residents' voices and make decisions that reflect our shared values and vision for Arlington Heights. This is an opportunity to give back to the village that has given so much to my family and me, and I am ready to work tirelessly to ensure our community remains strong for generations to come.

**3. What are the biggest challenges for the village in the next four years from a financial, development, and/or social perspective?** Arlington Heights faces several key challenges over

the next four years that will require thoughtful planning and strong leadership. Financial stability will be crucial as the village navigates economic uncertainty. Rising costs and shifting revenue sources demand careful budgeting to maintain essential services without overburdening taxpayers. At the same time, strategic investments in infrastructure, public safety, and economic development must continue to support long-term growth. The future of the Arlington Park site remains a major focus. Whether or not the Chicago Bears build their stadium, the village must ensure that any development maximizes economic benefits while prioritizing community needs. The challenge lies in attracting the right mix of businesses, housing, and entertainment that will enhance Arlington Heights while preserving its character. Infrastructure and public health must also be prioritized, particularly the replacement of lead service lines and improvements in stormwater management. Securing state and federal funding while managing local costs will be essential to keeping Arlington Heights safe and sustainable. As the village grows, maintaining a strong sense of community and fostering inclusivity will be vital. Expanding public engagement and ensuring housing options for young families, seniors, and local workers will help shape a more connected and thriving future.

**4. We will be discussing the possibility of a Bears development in Arlington Heights during our live forum. If the Bears do not relocate to Arlington Heights, how should the village approach the redevelopment of Arlington Park? What would be a good alternative?** If the Bears develop their stadium in Chicago, Arlington Park presents a major opportunity for smart, community-focused development. I'd advocate for a vibrant mixed-use space that balances economic growth with community needs. This could include an Innovation & Business Hub to support start-ups and job creation, along with restaurants, retail, and entertainment to create a lively gathering space. A mix of housing options would help young professionals, families, and seniors stay in Arlington Heights. A regional sports and recreation complex could host youth leagues, community events, and training facilities, attracting visitors and boosting local businesses. Sustainability should be a priority, incorporating green spaces, trails, and eco-friendly design to maintain Arlington Park's beauty. This type of development would generate tax revenue, create jobs, and enhance quality of life while preserving the character of Arlington Heights. Most importantly, residents must have a voice in shaping its future to ensure it truly benefits our community.

**5. What ideas do you have to keep property taxes paid to the village flat for the next few years?** Keeping property taxes flat while maintaining high-quality services requires smart financial management, strategic economic growth, and cost-efficient governance. Arlington Heights must focus on diversifying revenue sources to reduce reliance on property taxes. Encouraging business development and mixed-use projects can increase commercial tax revenue, lessening the burden on homeowners. The Arlington Park site presents a key opportunity for responsible economic expansion that benefits the village financially without increasing taxes. Efficient budgeting and cost-saving measures are also essential. Conducting regular audits of village spending can identify areas for savings while ensuring taxpayer dollars are used

effectively. Exploring public-private partnerships for infrastructure projects and leveraging state and federal grants can help fund necessary improvements without additional local tax increases. At the same time, Arlington Heights should promote smart, balanced development that aligns with community needs while generating revenue. Supporting local businesses, optimizing village services, and ensuring thoughtful, long-term financial planning will help keep property taxes stable while preserving the quality of life for residents.

**6. What are the greatest public safety challenges facing our community?** Arlington Heights is a safe and thriving community, but like any village, it faces public safety challenges that require proactive solutions. One key concern is ensuring adequate staffing and resources for emergency services as the community grows. Police, fire, and emergency medical services must have the personnel, training, and technology to respond effectively to both everyday incidents and large-scale emergencies. Another critical issue is addressing mental health and crisis response. First responders are increasingly encountering situations where mental health intervention is needed. Expanding partnerships between law enforcement, mental health professionals, and community organizations can improve outcomes and reduce unnecessary strain on emergency services. Traffic safety and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure remain important as well. With increased development and population growth, ensuring safe roadways, well-lit crosswalks, and proper traffic flow will be essential to prevent accidents and maintain a walkable, family-friendly environment.

**7. Arlington Alfresco is excellent but only runs for a few months. What are your ideas for turning downtown into a year-round destination?** Arlington Alfresco has been a huge success, and we should build on that momentum by creating year-round attractions that keep downtown vibrant in every season. Expanding winter-friendly experiences could transform downtown into a true destination, drawing both residents and visitors throughout the year. One idea is to introduce a winter market and holiday village, featuring local vendors, seasonal food and drinks, live entertainment, and festive lighting displays. A temporary ice skating rink or heated outdoor seating areas with fire pits could add to the charm, making downtown a go-to spot even in colder months. Beyond seasonal events, Arlington Heights can enhance indoor entertainment and cultural programming. Encouraging pop-up shops, art installations, and live performances in existing downtown spaces would create a dynamic atmosphere. Partnerships with local businesses and organizations could support indoor farmers' markets, food festivals, or themed restaurant weeks to drive foot traffic year-round. Additionally, expanding public art, or interactive experiences can make downtown a place where people want to gather no matter the season. A mix of creativity, community engagement, and strategic planning can ensure downtown Arlington Heights remains lively and inviting all year long.

**8. Given the significant changes between the previous and current administration at the national level, what are the implications for Arlington Heights that may require action from our Board or adjustments from our staff?** National policy changes can impact Arlington Heights in key areas like infrastructure, the economy, and public safety. With increased federal



funding for projects like lead pipe replacement and road improvements, the Village should actively pursue grants to upgrade infrastructure without raising taxes. Shifts in economic policy, including interest rates and tax changes, may affect local businesses and home values. Supporting small businesses and smart economic growth will help keep Arlington Heights financially stable. Public safety policies, especially around mental health services and first responder training, could offer new resources for the Village. Staying proactive in securing funding and adapting to evolving federal guidelines will strengthen community safety. Finally, national immigration and workforce policies may influence local demographics and employment. Arlington Heights should ensure local policies foster an inclusive, thriving community. By staying engaged and adaptable, the Village can successfully navigate these changes while protecting residents' interests.

**9. Do you have any potential personal or professional conflicts, real or reasonably perceived, that may arise if you were elected? How would you address those conflicts?** As the CEO of Shelter, Inc., a nonprofit organization that may occasionally request funding through community block grants from the Village of Arlington Heights, I recognize that this could be perceived as a potential conflict of interest. To maintain transparency and uphold ethical standards, I would recuse myself from all discussions, deliberations, and votes related to any funding requests or matters involving Shelter, Inc. This approach ensures that there is no undue influence or perceived bias in the decision-making process. Additionally, this potential conflict has been thoroughly reviewed and approved by Shelter, Inc.'s Board of Directors and our legal team to ensure full compliance with ethical guidelines and legal requirements.

**10. If you could change one major challenge facing Arlington Heights—something that seems difficult or even impossible to solve under current circumstances—what would it be? How would addressing this issue significantly improve our town?** One major challenge facing Arlington Heights is bridging the divide on diversity, equity, and inclusion in a way that strengthens our community and ensures that everyone feels welcome, valued, and heard. While our village has a rich history and strong community ties, there remains a gap in understanding and embracing the diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences of all residents. Strengthening partnerships between the village, schools, businesses, and local organizations can promote cultural events, leadership opportunities, and mentorship programs that foster connection across different groups. Ensuring that our village leadership and decision-making processes reflect the needs of all residents would help bridge this divide. Creating inclusive economic policies, fair housing opportunities, and equitable community engagement efforts would ensure that Arlington Heights remains a place where everyone belongs.

## Greg Zyck

**1. Please provide a brief biography of yourself.** I have been a resident in Arlington Heights since 1995 and in my current home since 1999. Over that time I have served:

- Board of Trustees for Arlington Heights Memorial Library for 12 years
  - Four years as president
  - Four years as treasurer
- Arlington Heights Housing Commission for six years
- Four years on Ivy Hill School PTA
- Two years Cubmaster for Ivy Hill School Pack 468
- 10 years as coach for baseball and basketball

For 37 years I served as an executive for Sales/Product Management/Marketing for multiple manufacturers. Just currently moved to a COO position for my wife's company, Northcentral Tax Services.

Been married to Krista Zyck since 1993 and we have three children: Justin/28 – Kyle/26 – Allison/23

**2. What are your reasons for running for trustee?** I find it incredibly rewarding to be of service to my community. For the last 12 years I have served on the Board of Trustees for the Arlington Heights Memorial Library. Before that I served for six years on the Housing Commission for the Village of Arlington Heights. While my kids were younger, I was also actively involved in organizations that supported the children of our community. I served two years as Cubmaster for Pack 468 out of Ivy Hill School, four years on the PTA at Ivy Hill School, and almost a decade as coach for youth basketball and baseball. Being of service and helping others grow are what drive me, and I have shown my commitment to this community. When it became apparent that there were going to be open seats on the Village Board, I knew that we had to fill those seats with individuals who care about our village and I have already proven that commitment. I felt I could fill the shoes of the impressive individuals who are stepping down. I am not doing this because I have other political goals or an agenda. I want to be of service to all those in this village. That is why I decided to run.

**3. What are the biggest challenges for the village in the next four years from a financial, development, and/or social perspective?** Financially, Arlington Heights is in a comfortable position. The fact that we went five years without increasing the tax levy yet still continued to offer all necessary services and eliminate the village sticker, is a demonstration of where we are. Outside of this, first and foremost, it is the situation with Arlington Park. If the Bears do decide that they want to build, it has to be done in a way that is good for all in the village. The incoming taxes/revenue must be greater than any additional expenses in the Village. It has to not adversely affect the downtown businesses that have worked hard to develop. Also, we have to understand what it does to traffic along the main corridors.

Along with Arlington Park, the completion of other development projects, such as Arlington 425. This project has been creeping along for far too long. This is valuable land that can be a benefit to all, once properly developed.

From a social aspect, Arlington Heights has long been the Village of Good Neighbors. Over the last few years the political climate has changed, in the country, as "Us vs Them". While the effect has been less in our village, it is definitely creeping in. To counter that we all have to make sure we open our minds to all and consider all. The Village Board needs to be a leader in this effort.

Our village is also welcoming multiple nationalities inside its borders. How do we integrate all into how we operate and live? This is another example of where we need to meet all where they are and open the conversations to welcome all into our community.

Lastly, with the size of our village we have many different economic levels living here. While none of us want our property values to go down, we do have to think about how all feel, economically, about living here. This amounts to those on fixed incomes, along with our children who we have raised here and may want to move back during the early stages of their careers.

**4. We will be discussing the possibility of a Bears development in Arlington Heights during our live forum. If the Bears do not relocate to Arlington Heights, how should the village approach the redevelopment of Arlington Park? What would be a good alternative?** This is the big question! There are 326 acres of prime real estate sitting there. Do we need more homes, more manufacturing, more retail, or an entertainment district? First of all, there has to be a developer willing to build on this land. It cannot be the village becoming the developer, as some towns have attempted. IF it goes in that direction, we would have to take every opportunity brought to us and evaluate with the criteria I will use for everything: Does it fit our community? How does it impact the neighbors? What are the required actions of the village and what would those costs be? My belief, though, is that it should not be a second downtown. Instead it needs to be one that compliments the other businesses in our village. As large as it is, I do not see it becoming one type of development. Adding an entertainment district, that does not adversely affect other venues in town, along with housing that would be affordable for those just starting out in their careers or those on fixed incomes would be something to look at.

**5. What ideas do you have to keep property taxes paid to the village flat for the next few years?** I am extremely proud that for the 12 years I have served on the Library Board, we did not raise the tax levy for 10 of them. We did this, while also opening the Makerplace and continually adding new programs that the citizens of Arlington Heights wanted, along with not doing it on the backs of the staff. With the potential of the Bears coming to Arlington Heights, there is concern that this will raise our property taxes. While I understand this fear, the taxing bodies do have control over these taxes and there are strategies that we can discuss to make sure these do not rise, inappropriately. First, we need to make sure that the property taxes and sales taxes coming in from the Bears development, outpace any additional costs that the village may

have to take on. From there, the Board of Trustees does have control at what the level of total taxes we levy are. For any cost brought before us, we need to ask the question "Is it necessary?". A simple question, but one that opens up the discussion to whether or not that cost needs to be incurred. For this last budget cycle, I was impressed that our Village Manager asked each department to base their costs on 95% of what their previous budget was. This is the type of approach that is fiscally responsible and I want to encourage. We never want to cut costs on the backs of the staff, but we do want to make sure that we are spending our money correctly.

**6. What are the greatest public safety challenges facing our community?** There have been some issues that have come up recently. Specifically with issues going on at Red Roof Inn. Overall, though, I feel that Arlington Heights is an extremely safe area. Having said that, we never want to let our guard down. Our police force is one of the best in the country and we need to continue supporting the men and women who put their lives at risk for our protection. Lately there has been an issue with finding qualified applicants. While I do not have the expertise of Chief Pecora, I will support his efforts in correcting this and becoming fully staffed.

Besides staffing, we also need to keep up to date on the technologies available to deter crime. While that does come with a cost that needs to be reviewed, the safety of all in our village is typically worth it.

**7. Arlington Alfresco is excellent but only runs for a few months. What are your ideas for turning downtown into a year-round destination?** Arlington Alfresco, while born out of the necessity of a bad situation, has become a destination for many and enhanced our downtown. It is a shame that as it gets colder, it has to stop. The corridor around the Campbell St and Vail Ave intersection is one that feels like it is built for a permanent outdoor mall atmosphere. What if we closed it down at Wing, Dunton, Highland and just north of the Vail Avenue Garage? Within that area, including Harmony Park, develop it into a mall where we can hold events year round, such as a Christkindlmarket. Other attractions, such as an outdoor ice skating rink on Harmony Park. These are only beginnings of idea to discuss, but, overall, make it to a place that all can enjoy year round. From there let's determine if we could possibly set up a business district. Lastly, we have to complete Arlington 425 to bring the additional residences that it has promised.

**8. Given the significant changes between the previous and current administration at the national level, what are the implications for Arlington Heights that may require action from our Board or adjustments from our staff?** Overall Arlington Heights has done a good job of being true to itself. Since the start of remaking downtown started over 25 years ago, we have gone through five different administrations. We have gone through an economic crisis. We have gone through a pandemic. All this and we have still prospered. While keeping an eye on changes that could happen, we have to continue to focus on what is best for Arlington Heights. That has served us well and we need our leaders to keep the focus on our village and not other potential personal agendas.

**9. Do you have any potential personal or professional conflicts, real or reasonably perceived, that may arise if you were elected? How would you address those conflicts? I do not.**

**10. If you could change one major challenge facing Arlington Heights—something that seems difficult or even impossible to solve under current circumstances—what would it be? How would addressing this issue significantly improve our town?** This village is doing many good things. Yes, there will always be issues such as infrastructure, the hiring of police officers, rising costs, and developing the open parcels of land. My biggest concern, though, has to be with the overall dialogue and bringing everyone together. We have a slogan of "Village of Good Neighbors". And we are! At the same time we have diverse communities within our village and three distinct regions: North, Central, and South. I know that there are people on the two opposite ends of town that do not feel they have a voice or are represented in what is decided. Also, there are many nationalities that are represented within our borders that are not heard from. While I know we have groups that are put together as we develop our new strategic initiatives, I feel we need to make these more permanent and given more of a seat at the table. Diverse opinions that are brought together, make everyone better and stronger. It bothers me the attacks that I read online, that are coming from all sides. If allowed to fester, these can wear down even the strongest of cultures. By having the leaders be proactive and working together, we can help all grow.