

# 2025 ELECTIONS

## Stephenson County/Regional Candidate Issue Positions

<b>FREPORT TOWNSHIP TRUSTEE</b>		
	<b>Kelvin McIlwain</b>	<b>Ted Odendahl</b>
<b>If elected, what is the most important issue you would be working to address?</b>	<p>Making sure the Township Assessors office has the technology and staff needed to make sure property values are accessed properly. I would also make sure Township continues to allocate funds to help Freeport citizens like the financial help we provide to the Senior Resource Center, providing rides for veterans to make their doctor appointments and the individual assistance we provide people.</p>	<p>I will be working to provide responsible, thoughtful, ongoing governance within our town/city to address issues as they arise. I am not running "on an issue." I am running as an individual with certain talents who is willing to serve their community. I'm not running against anyone. I'm running for an office for which I believe I am qualified and in which I am willing to serve.</p>
<b>Why should this issue be important to voters?</b>	<p>It is important for members of the community who need help be able to obtain the services they need.</p>	<p>Again, I am not interested in creating an issue. Issues come forward on their own accord as a matter of trying to live together in a community. I am offering a willingness and ability to listen carefully, analyze thoughtfully, challenge politely and judge carefully what is in the community's best interests.</p>
<b>Why would you be a good person to address this issue? Who would you solicit to help you in your efforts?</b>	<p>I have served one term already, so I am ready to apply what I have learned so that one thing that makes me a good person to address those issues. I have been involved with the community since I moved here in 1992. Being a Township Trustee is a continuation of my giving back to the community. For any issues we could use more input, I would be open to hearing from community members and would also partner with other organizations.</p>	<p>I am a good person to address the varied (and likely unanticipated) issues that will invariably arise, because of the acquired skills mentioned above. I am able to disagree, without being disagreeable. I am open to other's suggestions while keeping a healthy degree of skepticism about everyone's opinion, especially my own. I seek collaboration in virtually all efforts, and I think my past experience will provide a good foundation for building partnerships in the future. I invite cooperation from all directions.</p>
<b>What steps would you take or recommend be taken to tackle this issue?</b>	<p>For Township to help the community more, I will make sure we partner with the right organizations to provide resources to community members who need help. I will make sure the organization is in good financial health so the money is available to invest in the needed technology to assess property values accurately and have funds available to help those in need.</p>	<p>Build/keep a Board of Trustees focused on being responsible, forward planning stewards of the Townships resources; a board that will be proactive in serving the whole community. I'm not suggesting you would want a board filled with only people with my particular talents. I'm just suggesting that the talents I have would be a good addition to the board.</p>
<b>What is one thing that voters may not know about you that you'd like them to know?</b>	<p>I love history and have seen how often history repeats itself. Knowing our past history really helps understand current trends and what is happening in our country right now.</p>	<p>Many people know that I chose Freeport as home and came here literally knowing no one and started and built a successful business. Most people don't know that I chose that path coming out of the great frustration of working for the [state] government. What I would like people to know is that, while I believe there are many lessons a businessperson like myself can bring to the function of government, I do not believe that "government should be run like a business." Government is not, and should not be, a business. They are two different things and, if we want good government, we need to understand that.</p>

**FREERTOWN TOWNSHIP TRUSTEE (PAGE 2)**

	<b>Shane Orlow</b>	<b>Kathy Wilken</b>	<b>Kathy Altensey</b>
<b>If elected, what is the most important issue you would be working to address?</b>	A main issue that I would like to address is the continued crime in the area as well as the inequality within our City. The City has so much potential and we need to light a spark to see improvements in safety and infrastructure improvements.	To continue to provide services to our most vulnerable citizens during these challenging times. Freeport Township does not receive any Federal funds and solely relies on tax levied. Therefore, being fiscally responsible with taxpayers' money is very important to me because I want to ensure that the taxpayer is getting the best value for their tax dollars.	<i>Kathy Altensey did not respond to our requests for input.</i>
<b>Why should this issue be important to voters?</b>	These issues are important to the voters because we should all feel safe within our community and we should all have an equitable opportunity to move our community forward no matter what specific abilities and skills we can bring to the table.	Because the services and programs the Freeport Township provides are essential to the wellbeing of our most vulnerable citizens like the elderly, people with disabilities, youth and disadvantaged individuals.	
<b>Why would you be a good person to address this issue? Who would you solicit to help you in your efforts?</b>	I believe that I would be a good person to address these issues because I enjoy having a voice within the community and our local government. Not only will I utilize that voice, I feel that I can equally listen to the people, have the hard conversations with them, and reach a reasonable solution WITH them that benefits the whole community.	I am committed to serving those who need a hand up but not a hand out. I'm a hard worker who takes the initiative to find solutions, I would look to the current trustees to continue in these efforts. We work well together because we all have the same goal of servant leadership.	
<b>What steps would you take or recommend be taken to tackle this issue?</b>	I think these are issues that need to be talked about first. We seem to have limited discussions about improving these problems. We have to start at the discussion phase and move quickly to the action phase. We cannot continue to sit on the sidelines while crime, poverty, and lack of resources continue to impact the people in our City.	Go to the polls and vote! I would be honored if you voted for me, Kathleen F. Wilken and current incumbents; Kathleen Altensey, Kelvin McIlwain and Shane Orlow.	
<b>What is one thing that voters may not know about you that you'd like them to know?</b>	I am a teacher and a coach for FHS. I teach PE and coach Cross Country and Girls Track & Field. I have 2 Masters degrees in Differentiated Instruction as well as Exercise Sport Science.	I'm one of the founders of Pretzel Pickers which is a group of people who love their city and believe that a taking pride in one's community is imperative to change.	

**BOARD OF EDUCATION FSD 145**

	<b>Katrinna Carter</b>	<b>Alan Greene</b>	<b>Patricia Ludewig</b>
<b>If elected, what is the most important issue you would be working to address?</b>	<i>Katrinna Carter did not respond to our requests for input.</i>	Most important issue is how best to prepare students in FSD #145 for success in their future endeavors.	The reading curriculum. Also, the math curriculum.
<b>Why should this issue be important to voters?</b>		Helping students become able to succeed in life will help our entire community by, hopefully, creating productive, active and positive members of our community.	According to our scores which took a significant drop in 2012 and never recovered, the city is not able to attract and retain professional staff in the business and medical community. Clearly a change and new direction is needed in our school district.
<b>Why would you be a good person to address this issue? Who would you solicit to help you in your efforts?</b>		My thirty-four years of experience as an educator give me a strong insight into ways of making students successful. Achieving this goal will require the efforts of every member of the school board, every member of the district staff, the students' parents and the students themselves. As the saying goes, "it takes a village."	I have an MSE in Reading, have been a classroom teacher for 10 years and a reading specialist for 24 years. I'm a certified Dyslexia Specialist and was Director of the Children's Dyslexia Center in Freeport from 2004 through 2021.
<b>What steps would you take or recommend be taken to tackle this issue?</b>		I believe that the course we have set over the last four years will bring us to a successful conclusion. We will constantly monitor the process and make changes as needed.	Change the reading curriculum to include grammar, systematic and sequential phonics, sentence structure and explicit spelling rules. Change the math curriculum to include math understanding of basics: subtraction, addition, division, multiplication. Also, provide stronger discipline codes -- particularly in the lower grades. No cell phones in the classroom.
<b>What is one thing that voters may not know about you that you'd like them to know?</b>		I really can't think of anything.	I have been a Freeport resident since 1970 and have over 55 years in education and in private practice with dyslexic students. In 2004 Freeport was gifted with a jewel from the Masons: the Orton-Gillingham, intensive tutoring program for dyslexics. It was my privilege to be the director for 17 years.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION FSD 145 (PAGE 2)**

	<b>Dennis Myers</b>	<b>Ryan Shirley</b>	<b>Charlene Williams</b>
<b>If elected, what is the most important issue you would be working to address?</b>	The most important issue is to raise reading and math proficiency as the district is performing at 13% in English/ Language arts and 4.8% in math. Our district has a 50% rate of students requiring remedial courses to enter HCC college level courses.	Reading & Comprehension	If elected, I wanna make sure that all students are equipped and ready to choose the best path for them as they become productive members of our community.
<b>Why should this issue be important to voters?</b>	Our community needs a well-educated workforce. The ability to be able to see a task, complete it and have it done right are skills developed in schools with high standards. Without a well-educated workforce our health care network and businesses struggle to hire and retain.	A person who doesn't read, has no advantage over the person who can't read. The future generations have a greater chance to lead us to the promised land if they are equipped with the foundation of reading and comprehension. Thankfully, the district has made numerous strides in the right direction to address this issue.	This should be important to voters because our children are our future. They must be equipped with the necessary education to not only help themselves, but to help our community as well.
<b>Why would you be a good person to address this issue? Who would you solicit to help you in your efforts?</b>	I have 36 years of teaching experience, a BSE from WIU and an MSE from NIU, and endorsements in supervision of K-12 teachers, Health and physical education teaching, administration and special ed behavior disorders.	In my elementary years, Taylor Park had the "accelerated reader" program. As an avid participant, I would wake up at 5:00a.m. and read while my mother got things ready for the day. To this day, I'm still an avid reader because I understand the importance of exercising our brain muscles to increase our critical thinking skills. It all starts with the people. From the families, to the staff, to the community and the students themselves. We could gather data from Dr. Alvarado or Dr. Cloat, but ultimately it would be up to all of us to do our part.	: I feel as though I would be a good person to address this issue because of my passion for the children and for their education. When I became a board member, I also joined the education committee which oversees our curriculum for our schools. This affords me the opportunity to work closely with those who are making the decisions for what our children are being taught. I would solicit the Education Community, staff members and board members to help in this effort.
<b>What steps would you take or recommend be taken to tackle this issue?</b>	Focus on the reading and math curriculum; advocate for better discipline aided by a better dress code; place restrictions on cell phones; have a stricter attendance policy; and work to hire certified teachers.	Thankfully, the district has phenomenal people on the front line to tackle the day to day activities required to continually address this issue. From a board perspective, I would continue to support all efforts that lead our students to academic success.	As I mentioned previously, I would solicit the help of the education committee who can provide me with statistics and data to know where and how to place my focus and begin the process of achieving excellence for our children.
<b>What is one thing that voters may not know about you that you'd like them to know?</b>	I have been a Freeport resident since 1970 and an Elks member and past leader for 31 years.	While I am not employed by Freeport School District 145, I currently work in education (Highland Community College). Combine that with the fact I am the parent of a recent high school graduate and have children still in the district, I have a unique perspective to bring to the table, ie. alumni, parent, current employment, and current board member.	I would like for them to know that I have been an active member of the Freeport community for over 20 years. I have participated in many community activities such as big brothers, big sisters, grandparents, raising grandchildren, back to school drive, mentoring at various schools, and most importantly, maintaining my Christian faith, which allows me to pride myself in being fair open minded and factual in the things that I do. I look for solutions instead of making excuses.

## HCC TRUSTEE

	Shawn Boldt	Colton Havens (Write-In)
<b>If elected, what is the most important issue you would be working to address?</b>	Continuing current positive enrollment growth trends is critical to Highland Community College's viability. In order to remain competitive, vibrant, and financially sustainable we need to continue to grow enrollment through all means possible.	<i>Colton Havens did not respond to our requests for input.</i>
<b>Why should this issue be important to voters?</b>	There have been enrollment increases 5 of the past 6 semesters despite declining High School graduation numbers in our District. As the pool of graduating seniors drops, Highland needs to attract a higher percentage of those students each year in addition to attracting students of all ages and backgrounds regardless of what point they are at in their educational journey.	
<b>Why would you be a good person to address this issue? Who would you solicit to help you in your efforts?</b>	In addition to serving Highland locally by representing our 4 county region, I have served 3 years, and continue to serve, on the Executive Board of the Illinois Community College Trustees Association and have been elected to the National Board of Directors of the Association of Community College Trustees. This allows me access to leaders from all 48 Illinois community colleges, and over 1000 community colleges from across the country. I am able to share ideas, strategies and experiences that I bring back to our Highland district and put to use.	
<b>What steps would you take or recommend be taken to tackle this issue?</b>	I am working with the Illinois Community College Trustees Association, the Illinois Community College Board and the Governor's office to get a law passed that will allow HCC to award 4-year Baccalaureate degrees. This will keep more kids at Highland longer and allow some to complete degrees that they would never finish unless they were offered locally. We also need to attract more students of all ages and backgrounds through micro-credentials, life-long learning and new sports teams being developed. Additionally, we need to grow the Dual Credit and the College Now programs, as they are incredible programs giving the high school kids in our district a leg up and a learning edge toward their college education before even graduating high school.	
<b>What is one thing that voters may not know about you that you'd like them to know?</b>	I started my college journey at a Community College in Nebraska. After graduating from a high school class of 23, it was the perfect bridge for me to the University of Nebraska. After settling down in Freeport, I became very active in many aspects of community service. Finishing 14 years on the City Council, I wanted to stay involved and my kids were about to attend Highland so it seemed like the perfect time to give back to the CC system. Both kids have gone on to Illinois State and will receive their Master's degrees this Spring. The CC system has been invaluable to me and my family. I am committed to making HCC and the entire CC system as strong as it can be.	

## HCC TRUSTEE (PAGE 2)

	Gerald Podraza	James Endress
<b>If elected, what is the most important issue you would be working to address?</b>	<p>Most important issue – INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY– that is how people, all constituents (tax payers, students, community members) talk about Highland CC. The label used to describe what it is, how it contributes to the folks who reside in District #519 (Ogle, Carroll, Jo Daviess, and Stephenson). Are educational programs, technical or academic, derived from conversations with faculty and community; do they represent a work force needs assessment?</p>	<p>I will work to continue to keep Highland Community College on strong financial footing.</p>
<b>Why should this issue be important to voters?</b>	<p>INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY for the most part is based on Institutional Identity. How potential student, parents, business community members view the reputation of Highland CC can speak to motivation for attendance or participation in partnerships. If voters view the College as a highly valued asset, a contributor to the vitality of the individuals and community, they unilaterally promote, market the programs, show pride in how their investment works.</p>	<p>When the community college system was set up in the State of Illinois, the framework was for the local taxpayers to provide one third of the budget, the students to provide one third of the budget through the payment of tuition and the state to provide the remaining one third. Currently, the state of Illinois is providing about 8% of the college's budget, meaning that the college has to really be conscientious in using the dollars provided by tuition and the local taxpayers. Some of this shortfall comes from grant funds and gifts from the HCC Foundation but budget management is critical.</p>
<b>Why would you be a good person to address this issue? Who would you solicit to help you in your efforts?</b>	<p>Multiple and vary diverse experiences in Human Resource Development provide me with a background and the skill set to establish priorities through needs assessments, do program development, and evaluate existing and new projects. Partnership acquisition is critical to the above from viewpoint of business advisory groups and manufacturers/academic organizations. Ability to communicate effectively with faculty, community members, and administration also contributes to my above stated abilities.</p>	<p>I have 18 years' experience on the Highland Community College board. During this time, I have developed a comprehensive understanding of the fiscal structure of the college. I have also been actively involved with the ICCTA (State Trustees Association) and ACCT (National Trustees Association) in learning about these issues and establishing relationships with our state and national legislative representatives. We must continue to be proactive with these representatives to alert them to our needs and lobby for additional resources to help us meet those needs.</p>
<b>What steps would you take or recommend be taken to tackle this issue?</b>	<p>Begin with a status check: current enrollment, recruitment strategies, opportunities for work-based learning, evaluation of current program viability, out-reach to tax payers of District # 519, adult education possibilities, and active engagement by faculty and students with the community. Develop inexpensive out-reach projects through partnerships that promote use of numerous community based, undervalued assets!</p>	<p>As mentioned above, connecting with decision makers to alert them of the needs of the college is very important to achieving more funding. Additionally, the Board of Trustees and college administration are constantly looking for ways to cut costs or add new revenue streams. It has been many years since the college has asked local taxpayers to increase their tax rate to help fund the college and that is one thing that I hope to see continue while keeping Highland Community College financially viable for years to come.</p>
<b>What is one thing that voters may not know about you that you'd like them to know?</b>	<p>A person of integrity, youthful, thoughtful, and creativity. A team player who is motivated by inner fulfillment, persistent in realization of his goals.</p>	<p>I am born and raised in the Highland Community College District. All four of my children were educated at Highland Community College. I have taken classes there myself and also hold a Certificate from HCC. Beyond my HCC education, I hold both a Bachelors and Masters Degree from the University of Illinois in Agricultural Education and Education respectively and have devoted most of my adult life to education. My rural roots make me keenly aware of the importance of affordable access to a high quality college education. I would appreciate your vote so that I can continue my work with Highland Community College.</p>

**CITY OF FREEPORT MAYOR**

	<b>Josh Atkinson</b>	<b>Jodi Miller</b>
<b>If elected, what is the most important issue you would be working to address?</b>	As mayor, I plan to rebuild what's been broken. Over the past decade, this administration has lost the community's trust. Great things are possible, but if residents are skeptical, progress will face conflict. Freeport needs a clear direction for a future where neighborhoods thrive, businesses grow, and our streets are safe. Right now, that's not the case. Residents are kept in the dark, with little transparency, leading to confusion, distrust, and assumptions.	Since 2017, the city has given a lot of attention to rebuilding our aging and failing infrastructure. To date, we've invested over \$50 million in clean drinking water and environmentally sound disposal of our wastewater. We've paved nearly 20 miles of city streets. Last year we demolished a record 51 unsafe and blighted structures and saw 5,000 property code enforcement activities. We built up our police department and restaffed our bilingual school resource officer, gang detective, social worker, and our investigation, special victims, and K-9 units, while embracing new crime prevention and enforcement technology. With our public works and public safety infrastructure now in place, we will be investing more resources in strengthening our neighborhoods.
<b>Why should this issue be important to voters?</b>	Trust and transparency in local government are key to a thriving community. When residents feel informed, they are more likely to support positive changes. Without clear communication and direction, frustration and division can grow, hindering progress. By rebuilding trust, ensuring transparency, and supporting all neighborhoods, voters will feel more engaged and optimistic about their community's future.	The strength of our neighborhoods should be a priority for every Freeport resident. What happens in one neighborhood affects us all. Not only are our neighborhoods bound together in one city and share one park district, but most of our children in our neighborhoods are bound together in one school district and have friends from all four corners of our community. We all benefit when all neighbors are safe and thriving. Additionally, Freeport residents share the same city property tax base. Eroding property values in one neighborhood can and does impact the values, and ultimately, the tax base of the entire community.
<b>Why would you be a good person to address this issue? Who would you solicit to help you in your efforts?</b>	I am the person to address this issue because I'm committed to restoring trust through transparency and open communication. I understand the importance of engaging with all Freeport residents and ensuring their voices are heard. My focus will be on rebuilding relationships and fostering community. To help, I would work with local leaders, community organizations, and residents who are dedicated to making Freeport a better place for all.	As a resident of Freeport for most of my adult life and former business owner and city alderman, I've had the opportunity to understand a lot about Freeport. As Freeport's mayor, I've learned how city government, finances, legislation, property code and law enforcement, and economic development, works and, at times, doesn't work. I've developed strong working relationships with both federal and state officials including US Congressman Eric Sorensen, and with many leaders who serve on our local governing and taxing bodies. Investing in our neighborhoods and improving our public safety requires all of Freeport's leaders to work together, but most importantly it requires the neighbors themselves.

**CITY OF FREEPORT MAYOR (CONT)**

	<b>Josh Atkinson</b>	<b>Jodi Miller</b>
<p><b>What steps would you take or recommend be taken to tackle this issue?</b></p>	<p>To tackle this issue, I would improve communication by holding regular town halls and forums to keep residents informed. I'd ensure transparency by providing clear updates on government actions through various channels. Rebuilding trust would involve working closely with local organizations and community leaders. I'd also set clear goals by creating a shared vision for Freeport's future, focusing on thriving neighborhoods, business growth, and safety. Lastly, I'd engage residents through platforms that allow them to actively contribute to shaping the city's future.</p>	<p>Over the next four years, we will continue to be aggressive in removing blight, enforcing property codes, and end illegal dumping in our neighborhoods. We will look for ways to activate empty lots with affordable, infill housing and work to reestablish affordable housing rehabilitation funding. We will support our newly reorganized Freeport Police Department and improve our neighborhood public safety by incorporating Community Policing strategies in our law enforcement and crime prevention efforts. Conversion of street lighting to high intensity LED lighting in high crime areas will be a priority. We will strengthen our community partnerships and double our efforts to support our at-risk youth and diversion programs that keep them safe.</p>
<p><b>What is one thing that voters may not know about you that you'd like them to know?</b></p>	<p>I am just like Freeport. I am bi-racial, with a rich past full of both successes and struggles, and I strive to be the best I can be. I am willing to put in the work. Have the hard conversations and face uncomfortable situations in order to move forward. I am a Navy veteran, I support our men and women in blue, and I will do my part to ensure that every member of this community is treated fairly.</p>	<p>Serving Freeport as its mayor has truly been one of the greatest honors of my life. The last eight years have been a truly amazing experience for me. I have learned so much about this community and about myself. Both good and bad. I've had days as your mayor that I didn't think I could laugh any harder and days where I couldn't stop crying. I have been blessed by this community beyond measure and hold sacred the relationships, friendships, and bonds I have had the opportunity to forge with so many people. I am forever grateful.</p>



**CITY COUNCIL 2ND WARD ALDERPERSON**

	<b>Sue Cook</b>	<b>Linda Johnson</b>
<b>If elected, what is the most important issue you would be working to address?</b>	The most important issue I would address would be to listen to the concerns of my constituents. It's their questions, their wants that will be brought to the City Council floor, not mine. I would be THEIR voice. In accordance with this, I would also like to bring decorum back to the City Council. It's gotten a bit too "reality TV" to some of the viewers.	<i>Linda Johnson did not respond to our requests for input.</i>
<b>Why should this issue be important to voters?</b>	The voters will know that they will have an Alderman/ally on the City Council that will be representing their concerns in the Second Ward. Second Ward is vast and diverse. All of the constituents need to know that I am working for them. ALL voices need to be heard.	
<b>Why would you be a good person to address this issue? Who would you solicit to help you in your efforts?</b>	I've lived in Freeport 65 years. My Father was a dentist in the Smith Building. I've watched Freeport during its glory days, and when things faltered. I know this town well. Freeport is resilient, and we need new ideas to spark it to life. That's how we attract new businesses. I would solicit the help of the Mayor, City Manager, all of the Directors, and my fellow Aldermen. We must ALL work together to create a better Freeport.	
<b>What steps would you take or recommend be taken to tackle this issue?</b>	I would tackle issues by listening to my constituents, researching solutions, talking with my peers and thinking outside the box. That is the only way things are going to get done. We must listen to our constituents, and to each other with respect and kindness. That has been lacking as of late.	
<b>What is one thing that voters may not know about you that you'd like them to know?</b>	I am tenacious. When there is a problem, I will go above and beyond to get it settled. Even if the answer I receive is "no" or "not at this time." I want to be able to account to my constituents. Communication and respect are key.	