



**Grand Valley Metro Council
Legislative Committee**

Agenda

**May 12, 2010
8:30 a.m.**

GVMC Offices – 678 Front Ave. NW, Suite 200 - Grand Rapids, MI 49504

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Review and comment on final draft legislative issues survey vehicle for candidates seeking seats in the 96th Michigan Legislature**
- 3. The Political Caucus Vortex – A conversation on the poisoned political atmosphere in Lansing**
 - a. Mike Frederick, Principal, the Frederick Group - Lansing**
- 4. Issues Update**
 - a. State Budget Negotiations**
 - b. Unfunded Mandates Legislation**
 - c. State and Federal Transportation Funding**
- 5. Other Issues and comments by members**



GRAND VALLEY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

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May _____, 2010

Hon. Robert VerHeulen
(STREET ADDRESS)
Walker, MI (ZIP)

RE: Grand Valley Metro Council Legislative Candidate Survey

Dear Rob:

On behalf of the Hon. James Buck, Chairman, and the members of the Board of Directors of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC), we want to congratulate you on your decision to run as a candidate in the (REPUBLICAN / DEMOCATIC) primary for a seat in the Michigan (SENATE / HOUSE). The challenges facing our West Michigan region and the entire state of Michigan are daunting. They will be overcome by the actions of thoughtful individuals like you who are willing to work collaboratively with colleagues from both parties in the Legislature – together with the Governor – to craft common sense solutions to our problems and challenges and pursue opportunities for economic revitalization and growth.

Incorporated on October 1, 1990, the Grand Valley Metro Council is the regional collaborative body that brings together county and local government officials from across West Michigan to discuss and analyze regional challenges and develop creative solutions in an atmosphere of cooperation. The Metro Council's Legislative Committee – consisting of all members of the Council – continually monitors activities at the Capitols in both Lansing and Washington; recommends to members a list of legislative priorities of critical interest to our region's counties and home towns; and tracks progress on these priority issues as they move through the legislative process.

In order to better inform our membership about the views and problem-solving ideas of candidates for the 96th Michigan Legislature, we are asking you to spend a few moments completing the attached candidate questionnaire. The policy issues and topics upon which we are seeking your views and perspectives reflect the GVMC's legislative priorities. Your views on these issues are important to us.

We will share your answers with our members across the West Michigan region so that they, and the citizens they represent, can make informed decisions during the upcoming primary election. We also intend to track and analyze legislators' votes on these issues during the 96th Michigan Legislature and develop a scorecard on these issues that will enable county, city, township and village officials across West Michigan to better understand how our elected legislators are voting on issues of importance to us.

Our objective is to work in partnership with you to accomplish our legislative goals and priorities, resolve the difficult problems that Michigan now faces, and together make this a better state to live, work learn and play.

Thank you, in advance, for participating in the Metro Council's legislative candidate survey. We would be grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and return it to us in the pre-paid envelope by June 1, 2010.

We look forward to hearing from you

Very truly yours,

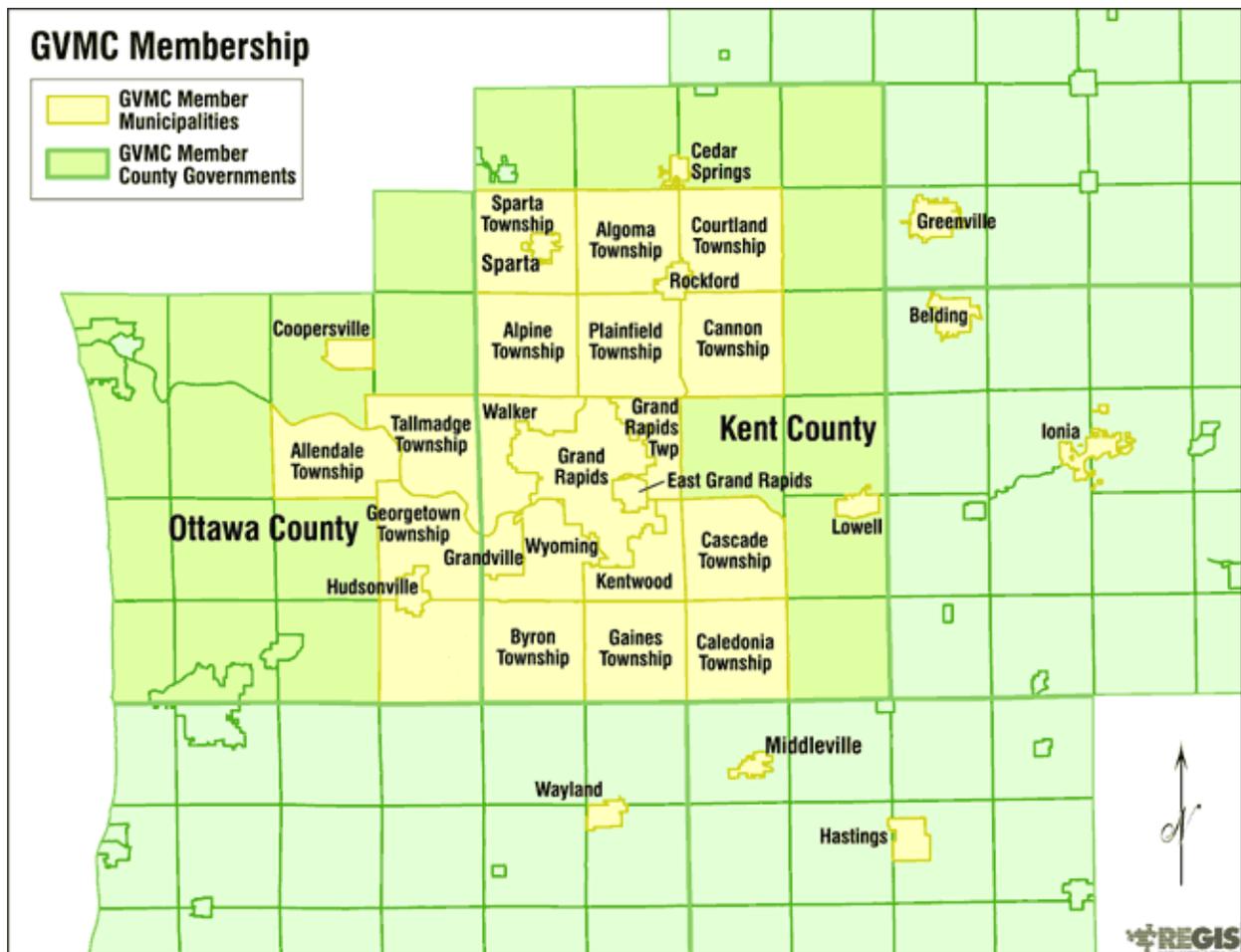
Hon. Richard Root, Chair
GVMC Legislative Committee
Mayor, City of Kentwood

Hon. Michael J. Devries, Vice Chair
GVMC Legislative Committee
Supervisor, Grand Rapids Charter Township



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The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council

Candidate Questionnaire

Senate and House Candidates for the 96th Michigan Legislature

Who is Rob VerHeulen, candidate for the 86th District, Michigan House of Representatives?

Age:

Phone:

Cell:

Email:

Website:

Family:

Education:

Professional Background:

Civic background:

Top priorities if elected to the Michigan House / Senate:

What are your views on the role of county and local governments in delivering essential services to the people of your district?

Governmental Reforms

Elimination of Obstacles for Multi-Jurisdictional Service Sharing

Current state laws, enacted in the late-1960s, contain specific statutory obstacles that significantly impede the ability of Michigan counties, cities, villages and townships to form partnerships for the purpose of jointly providing critical public services. For decades, state statutes enabling county and local governments to form multi-jurisdictional compacts to share the cost of service provision have contained language that requires payment of the highest level of wages and benefits to public employees assigned to such work arrangements. These statutory provisions have stalled service sharing partnerships across the state.

The Grand Valley Metro Council is seeking amendments to several existing state statutes that will make it easier for counties and communities to share resources and more efficiently deliver essential county and local services:

1. 1967 Public Act 7 – Urban Cooperation Act
2. 1967 Public Act 8 – Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities Act
3. 1989 Public Act 292 – The Metropolitan Councils Act

Question: As a legislator, could you support amendments to these statutes that will encourage counties and local units of government to share the responsibilities and costs of providing public services in a more efficient manner?

Please discuss your thoughts regarding the Grand Valley Metro Council's goal of sharing resources and more efficiently delivering essential county and local services.

Restoring Common Sense to Collective Bargaining

In 1969 state lawmakers passed Public Act 312, a law that triggers compulsory binding arbitration when public safety employees -- police and firefighters -- and a county or local government employer reach an impasse during the process of collective bargaining for wages and benefits. In exchange, police officers and firefighters relinquished the right to strike.

Over the years, Act 312 has cost local communities and their taxpayers millions of dollars in increased costs. Under the law, the arbitration panel assigned to any particular dispute must choose either the employer's offer or the union's offer -- not something in-between. What's more, the arbitration panel is prohibited from considering the fiscal health of the community and, therefore, its ability to pay the wage and benefit levels selected by the arbitration panel.

The Grand Valley Metro Council strongly supports amendments to Act 312 of 1969 to restore balance to the arbitration process and require arbitration panels to consider the community's fiscal health and ability to pay an arbitration award. In addition, the Metro Council supports amendments to Act 312 to improve the process used to select arbitration panel members.

Question: As a legislator, would you support common sense reforms to Act 312 – the Compulsory Binding Arbitration law – that would allow arbitrators to consider the fiscal health of the county or community; improve the process for selecting arbitrators; and make other changes to restore balance to the arbitration process?

Please discuss your thoughts and ideas regarding the Grand Valley Metro Council's goal of adopting common sense reforms to the current collective bargaining process.

Unfunded State Mandates

State government has routinely ignored the 1978 Headlee Amendment to the Constitution which prohibits the Legislature or state agencies from mandating actions by counties, cities, villages and townships without providing the funding needed to implement those changes, according to the report of the Legislative Commission on Statutory Mandates. The Commission, empanelled by the Legislature, found that in just 2009 alone, the state imposed more than \$2.2 billion in unfunded mandates on counties and local units. The LCSM proposed new statutes to mitigate the impact of unfunded mandates and new rules to prevent the Legislature and state agencies from imposing unfunded mandates on counties and locals.

The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council steadfastly opposes the imposition of unfunded state mandates on counties and local units and strongly encourages the Governor, Legislature and Supreme Court to adopt the recommendations cited in the final report of the Legislative Commission on Statutory Mandates.

Question: As a legislator, would you vote against legislation that imposes unfunded state mandates on our counties and home towns?

Would you support legislation to prohibit the imposition of unfunded state mandates on counties and local units?

Please discuss your views on how unfunded mandates should be addressed.

Local Fiscal Stability

State Revenue Sharing for Counties, Cities, Villages and Townships

In the early 1970s, Michigan established a system of revenue sharing intended to return state tax dollars to local governments to assist with the provision of essential services. In return, counties and communities gave up the ability to raise taxes locally. In recent years, state government has cut payments to local governments by more than \$2 billion – forcing the layoff of more than 1,800 police officers and scores of firefighters and increasing the pressure on local property tax payers to fund critical local services that provide a high quality of life.

The Grand Valley Metro Council supports the reauthorization of the formula for distributing the statutory portion of state shared revenues in a manner that restores revenue sharing payments to Michigan Counties and fully funds the state's historic revenue sharing obligations to Michigan's cities, villages and townships.

Question: As a legislator, would you work to restore statutory revenue sharing payments to counties, cities, villages and townships to ensure that essential public services are maintained?

Please share your thoughts on the responsibility of the state to assist county and local governments in the delivery of public services.

Transportation Funding

Michigan's transportation network – roads and highways, bridges and public transportation systems – is deteriorating at an alarming rate due to lack of steady and secure funding, coupled with rising costs for the materials needed to maintain our existing system. With transportation needs increasing and available funding not able to keep pace with the growing demands of the state's transportation network, our state needs a comprehensive strategy for fully funding Michigan's transportation system in the 21st century

The Grand Valley Metro Council joins a diverse group of voices in the private and public sectors – including the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, the Michigan Infrastructure and Transportation Association and the Michigan Municipal League – in supporting a substantial increase in both state and federal funding for transportation infrastructure improvements, public transit operations and regional planning activities through Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Question: As a legislator, would you support the effort by a broad-based coalition of state and regional organizations to increase state transportation funding?

Please articulate your views on how the state can best finance needed improvements to its total transportation network.