

2026 BELTRAMI COUNTY ELECTION GUIDE



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BELTRAMI COUNTY VOTING INFORMATION

Where and when do I vote?

There are three ways to vote in Minnesota: by mail, early in-person and in-person on Election Day.



Voting by mail began Sept. 18. Some precincts in rural areas are mail ballot precincts, and ballots are automatically mailed to registered voters there. If you don't live in a mail ballot precinct, you can still request a ballot at mnvotes.gov/absentee. You can return your ballot by mail, and those ballots must be received by no later than 8 p.m. on Election Day. Or, you can drop it off yourself at your county elections office no later than 5 p.m. on Election Day.



Early in-person voting also began Sept. 18. You can go to your county's early voting location(s), usually the courthouse or government center, and fill out an absentee ballot. You will need to know your MN ID or Social Security number to fill out the application.

Starting Oct. 16, voters can cast ballots as part of the "early voting process," which is more similar to voting on Election Day. You'll fill out a short certificate, fill out a ballot and then put it into the ballot counter.

Beltrami County's early voting locations are: Beltrami County Auditor-Treasurer's Office in Bemidji (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.), Bemidji State University in Bemidji (Tuesday-Wednesday, Oct. 20-21, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.), Leech Lake Mission Community Center in Cass Lake (Friday, Oct. 23, 4-8 p.m.) and Old Red Lake Community Center (Wednesday, Oct. 28, noon-6 p.m.)



On **Election Day**, Tuesday, Nov. 3, you can go to your local polling place to vote until 8 p.m. You can find your polling place at mnvotes.gov/pollfinder.

Local election officials also send teams of election judges to nursing homes and hospitals during the 35 days before the election and provide ballots to voters who live in the city or town where the facility is located. You can contact facility management or your local election office to find out when that will happen.

How do I register to vote?



You can register to vote or update your registration online at mnvotes.gov or by returning a paper form to your local elections office until Oct. 13. You'll need your Minnesota ID or Social Security number.

You can also register when you vote, either early in-person or on Election Day. You'll need to bring one proof of residence, like your driver's license or a photo ID paired with a bill or lease.

BELTRAMI COUNTY VOTING INFORMATION

Where can I find more information?



For more details on voting, you can visit mnvotes.gov, call 1-877-600-VOTE (8683), text 651-217-3862 or contact your county election office.

For more on the 2026 election, including candidates, maps and more, visit kaxe.org/election2026.

What is KAXE?



KAXE is a Northern Minnesota community radio station, founded in 1976. We have signals in Grand Rapids (91.7), Bemidji (90.5) and Brainerd (89.9), and our broadcast can be streamed at kaxe.org or on the NPR app.

KAXE News began in 2023, and our team of five journalists put together this Election Guide. The team includes News Director Chelsey Perkins, Northwest Minnesota Reporter Larissa Donovan, North-Central Minnesota Reporter Megan Buffington, Northeast Minnesota Reporter Emma Krab and Stella Mayerhoff, Report for America corps member covering water and agriculture.

Stay updated on local news across our region by listening to the *Up North Report*, our daily 5-minute newscast. You can find it at our website or on your favorite podcast app.

More about this KAXE Election Guide



KAXE's election guides inform people about voting and elections. We don't want to tell you how to vote, but we want to play a role in empowering you to vote by providing unbiased and trustworthy reporting.

This Election Guide features only contested races in communities with a population of at least 100. "Contested" means those in which more people are running than the number of available seats.

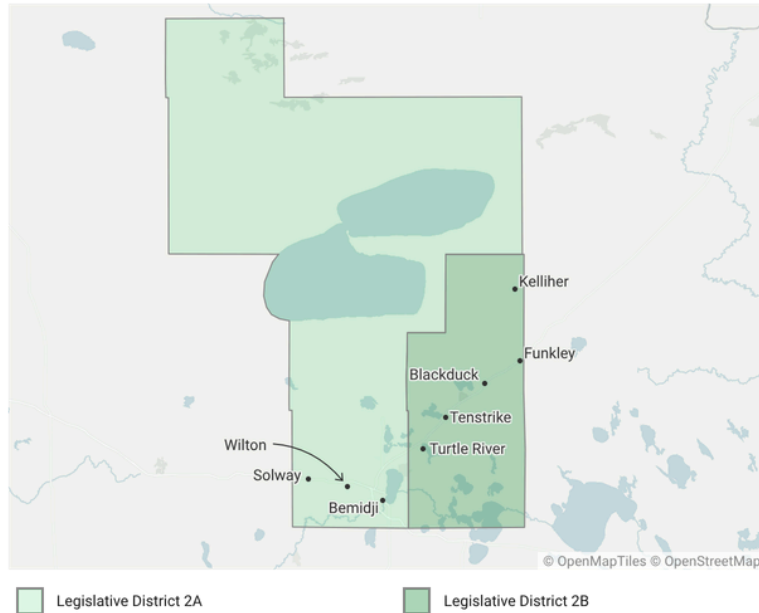
Candidate responses have not been edited and are published as submitted. As necessary, our News Team added contextual information and corrected inaccuracies, marked with editor's notes in italics.

KAXE contacted every candidate at least three times using contact information submitted to the Secretary of State's Office when they filed for office. Please contact us at news@kaxe.org with questions or comments or to report any errors.

BELTRAMI COUNTY VOTING INFORMATION

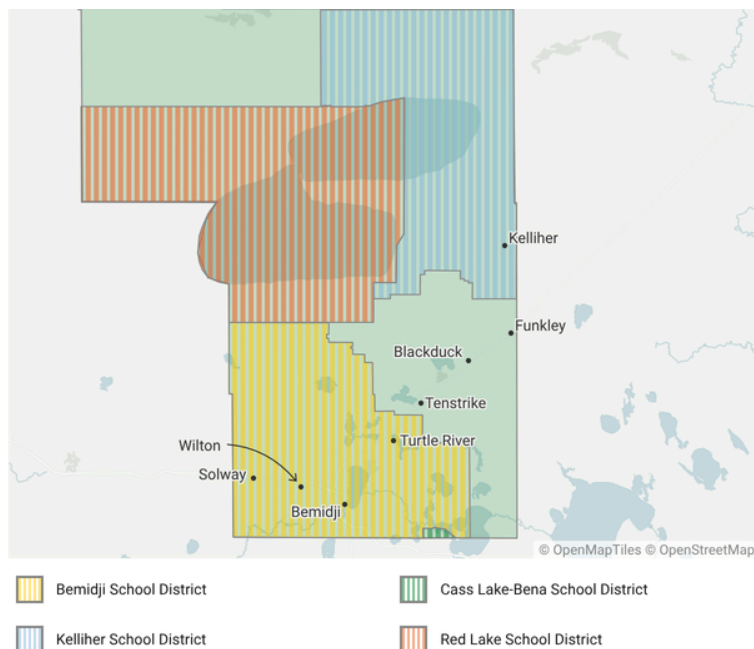
Which district do you live in?

Legislative Districts



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School Districts

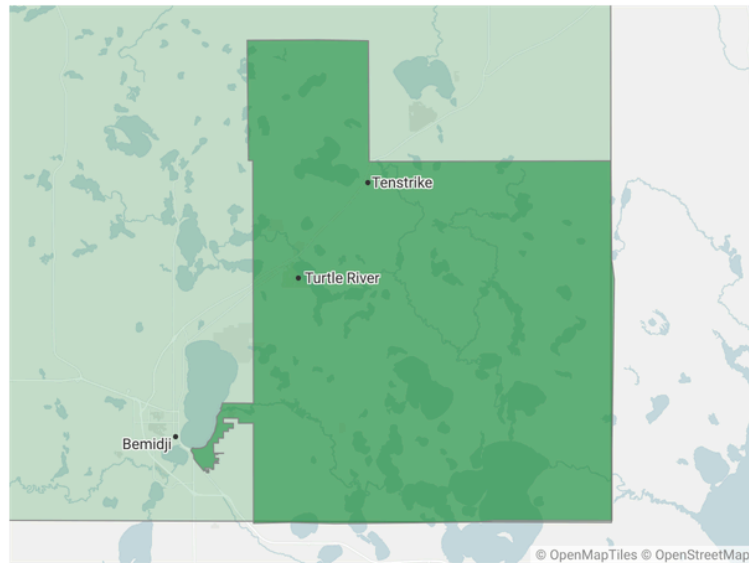


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BELTRAMI COUNTY VOTING INFORMATION

Which district do you live in?

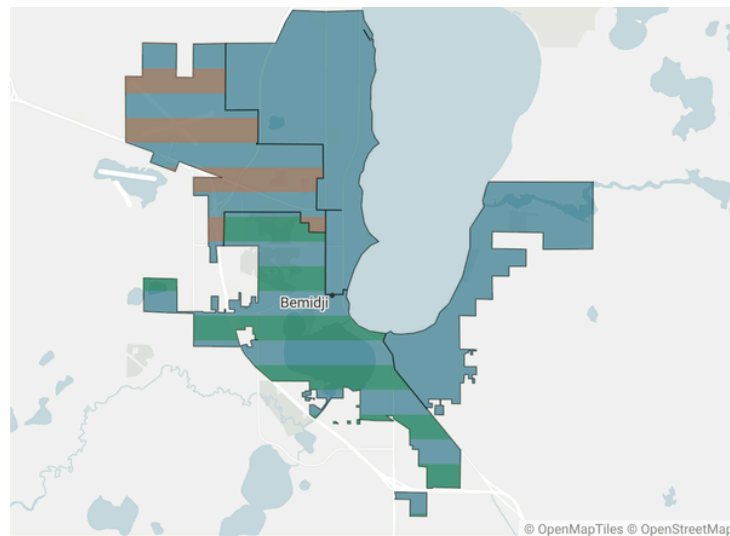
County Board Districts



Commissioner District 1

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Bemidji City Districts



Ward 2

Ward 4

Bemidji

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U.S. HOUSE 8TH DISTRICT



Pete Stauber*

Incumbent

Republican

petestauberforcongress.com



Trina Swanson

DFL

trinaforcongress.com

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.
Candidate campaign website as reported to the Minnesota Secretary of State.

U.S. HOUSE 8TH DISTRICT



Party: DFL
Age: 46
Community:
Hermantown

Trina Swanson

When Trump's administration asked me to carry out directives I believed were unethical, I walked away from my career. I started my own law firm and decided to use all my experience and leadership skills in national security, foreign policy, diplomacy, and immigration to fight for fellow Minnesotans.

Why are you running? Our district has seen the outcome of relying on the same representation for years: a focus on identity politics rather than day-to-day issues, and catering to the Trump administration rather than Minnesota families. Across this district, voters keep asking the same question: who has the experience and dedication to make life more affordable and strengthen our communities? Our current representation has been unable to articulate how they will enact concrete change.

Being effective in Congress requires Representatives with the skills to work across the aisle, identify solutions, build coalitions, and get laws passed. It requires an understanding of the issues at hand, including foreign policy, national security, and immigration. It also requires a willingness to learn about the issues one may not be fluent in, recognizing that we have a broad depth of issues to tackle in this country. I am ready to be that Representative.

Why should voters elect you? I have proven my commitment to listening to voters across the District regardless of affiliation. Sitting down and having conversations with people, listening

to their struggles, questions, and concerns, is the only way to move beyond divisive identity politics. I have worked hard to ensure my candidacy is centered around my skills, experience, and tangible solutions for Minnesota families' everyday challenges. I grew up here. The 8th District is my family, friends, and neighbors. I know I can win the 8th because I am winning people over one conversation at a time. This message is resonating: Minnesotans are ready for representation that puts kitchen table issues first and brings opportunity at home.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. I have traveled all 31,000 miles and 21 counties in this District, and it is clear that the District wants strong communities with good-paying jobs, affordable and accessible healthcare, new industry investment, and to preserve our lakes and wilderness for future generations to enjoy. To make this a reality, we must enact universal healthcare, ensure proper federal funding for childcare, schools, hospitals, and the programs the working class relies upon, and attract new industries with good-paying, union jobs to the district.

(continued on next page)

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? JET Global Solutions, LLP; Founding Partner and Attorney at Law

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I grew up in Hermantown, Minnesota, where my mother worked as a nurse and my father worked first as a carpenter, then at the paper mill. They instilled in me the Minnesota values of unions, hard work, and caring for your community. Those lessons drove me to a career in public service at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and I was proud to represent the United States across the globe, leading offices and national emergency responses. I proudly served under several Administrations, worked with people from both sides of the aisle, and identified and implemented solutions to problems.

U.S. HOUSE 8TH DISTRICT

Trina Swanson (continued)

We currently have a representative who supports cuts to programs that the middle class relies upon, so the 1% can receive greater tax breaks. I will fight for Minnesota to receive proper federal funding, instead of today's status quo: placing the responsibility on the state, resulting in property tax increases. People should be able to stay in the communities they love, raise families, and retire with dignity.

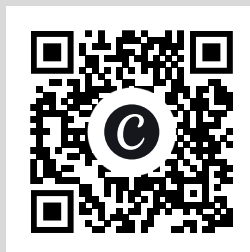
What are your natural resources policy positions?

Generations to come must be able to enjoy this amazing land we call home. We must respect the science, experts, and regulatory processes that ensure corporations use the most advanced technological means in their industries to minimize the impact on our environment and manage natural resources sustainably.

I will ensure proper funding for federal agencies with oversight of our natural resources. We must return to proper staffing levels across federal agencies and reopen the critical offices that closed.

I support our mining industry and miners, just as I believe in protecting Minnesota's natural resources by consistently enforcing environmentally responsible regulatory practices. At the end of the day, mining must benefit our communities, prioritize our workforce, and protect our environment. When I am elected to Congress, I will support legislation to protect the Boundary Waters, while also supporting and protecting Minnesota's robust mining industry.

Looking for statewide candidates? Visit the link below for detailed guides on who's running for U.S. Senate, Minnesota governor, attorney general, secretary of state and auditor.



kaxe.org/electionguide

MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE

Read more on page 9

Senate District 2



Steve Green*
Incumbent
Republican



Dan R. Rogers
DFL
danrogersmn.com



Calvin Larson Jr.
United New
Independence

Read more on page 11

House District 2A



Bidal Duran Jr.*
Incumbent
Republican
duranforhouse.com



Reed J. Olson
DFL
VoteReedOlson.com

Read more on page 12

House District 2B



Matt Bliss*
Incumbent
Republican
mattbliss.us



Emily Thabes
DFL
emilythabesformn.com

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 2



Party: DFL
Age: 65
Community:
Guthrie

Dan R. Rogers

Why are you running?

I want those that follow to have a better future. In terms of humanity that means to treat others with respect and dignity and to always work to give those who are less fortunate a better life. We need to ensure as well, that the organisms we coinhabit this planet with, may also sustain their lives.

Why should voters elect you?

If elected I will strive to bring to fruition a better Minnesota: A state in which healthcare is not a privilege but a right; A state in which our children can attend childcare that is affordable, safe and of high-quality; A state in which housing is available and affordable; And a state that safeguards our environment.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals.

Priority number one: Affordable healthcare - all citizens of MN deserve healthcare that they can afford. I will work to ensure that this becomes a reality. Priority number two: Affordable childcare - childcare is infrastructure. Helping young families by providing affordable, safe and high quality childcare is as

important as having good quality roads. Priority number three: Affordable housing - citizens of this state have a basic right to housing that is affordable. Working with cities and counties across the state we develop strategies to build the housing units we need.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

Minnesota has a high quality of life. Taxes support much of those quality factors. Recent federal cuts to programs like SNAP are placing additional costs and manpower burdens on counties. Overall costs for construction, health care, fuel and labor are increasing which puts additional pressures on counties and cities to maintain amenities and needed infrastructure. Residents of our state currently have these options available: Property tax deferral program for senior citizens; regular homestead credit refund; and a program aimed at giving some veterans and their families relief on property taxes.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Retired teacher. I am still farming and do winter logging.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. As a high school/middle school science teacher for 38 years I worked with thousands of students that encompassed a spectrum of abilities. Giving those students a science education that emphasized interaction with the natural world around them was always important. Working with people and working to make this world a better place go hand in hand.

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 2



Party:

United New Independence

Age: 30

Community:

Clearwater County

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Independent Contractor / Conifer Transit

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. 14 years of service in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as a cook coordinator. This experiences brings how state departments operate internally, what works and where the shortfalls are.

Obtained an associates degree from Institute of Production and Recording for Music Production and Engineering. This experience will help to handle different views, approaches and characters. This will help deal with short term deadlines and working on a project/bill you may not want to work on.

Calvin Larson Jr.

Why are you running? I have lost faith that the state's leadership and legislature will fix the problems they have created from unfunded programs, potential fraud, and lack of accountability. The 2 major parties focus on dividing voters and not uniting them. I will bring a new perspective to the legislature and call out harmful legislation that they may attempt to pass. I chose to run as an independent as the 2 parties have failed voters and i have no plans to fall down the 2 party lines. The Democrats and Republicans have gotten us to where we are today. Are you the voter satisfied with your candidates/party's accomplishments in recent years?

Why should voters elect you? This campaign offers transparency by informing voters of potential harmful legislation such as the "data center regulation" bill from 2025. Billionaires are given tax breaks by the MN legislature while taxes and fees go up on us. Minnesota operates for the profit of corporations at the expense of the working class. I will NEVER stay silent on corruption within our government regardless of party affiliation.

This campaign will submit bills to the legislature on AI Transparency Act, Prohibit Hidden Fees from electricity, insurance, and cellular companies, lower income taxes, expand employee rights, and the Surplus Investment Program.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. 1. Repeal "data center regulation" bill from 2025

- data center bill gave a "sales tax exemption" to data centers for up to 35 years.
- 2. Lower income taxes / raise corporate tax rate / raise "gross premium tax"
- lower income taxes by 0.5% for working class.
- Raise corporate tax rate to 15% (currently 9.8%).
- Raise "gross premium tax" paid by insurance companies to 5.25% (currently 1.26%).
- 3. Artificial Intelligence Transparency Act
- Companies must place a disclaimer on building/website of its use of AI and what it is used for.
- Companies utilizing Artificial Intelligence must create a policy and training regarding AI safety for the employees.
- Require employers to give a disclaimer to employees on the use of AI within the company
- Prohibition of AI to determine an individual's social score/public rating.
- Information deletion policy for AI accessing personal data.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

- Change the formula for how property tax is calculated.

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 2A



Party: DFL
Age: 51
Community:
Bemidji

Reed J. Olson

state level. In 2019, I was selected as a Policy Fellow by the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of MN. I was also recently named Minnesota State Co-Chair for the U.S. Term Limits organization.

Why are you running? We deserve nice things in rural Minnesota. We don't just deserve to survive, we deserve to thrive. Currently my neighbors are facing tough challenges with housing, affordability, healthcare, childcare and low-wage jobs. Right now, Bemidji needs thirteen hundred more homes just to meet our housing need.

As a county commissioner, I saw how the State impacted the county's ability to deliver services. I understand that we need statewide solutions to statewide problems. We also need a strong voice in the House that can stand up for rural Minnesotans when policies don't work in our area.

I have a proven track record of making noise when needed. I'm known for finding solutions for our vulnerable neighbors when nobody else can. I've spent twenty years building productive bridges, networks and partnerships in District 2A and I have the passion and preparedness to bring that fight to Saint Paul.

Why should voters elect you?

You should vote for me because I will make the government work for us again. From Bemidji to Red Lake to Lake of the Woods, I have earned a reputation as a relentless advocate, problem solver and collaborator who

brings people together to get things done. For years, I've seen the challenges families face firsthand here in rural Northern Minnesota—whether as an elected representative, a small business owner, or a non-profit director. Send me to Saint Paul because I understand what's happening here. I know that "affordability" isn't just a talking point; it is the dignity of having a roof over your head and the security of knowing your kids are well cared for. I have the experience, passion and follow-through to advocate for us and bring essential resources to our district.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals.

Increase Housing Stock in Rural Minnesota
We need to increase funding to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency to focus specifically on rural communities.

Childcare for All
We need to make childcare accessible and affordable. We cannot grow our workforce if we don't solve this critical issue. Childcare is an investment in the Minnesota economy as much as it is an investment in working families.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? The Nameless Coalition for the Homeless, Executive Director

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I am a cook, small business owner, former two-term Beltrami County Commissioner, Bemidji City Councillor, and director of a community nonprofit. As an elected representative I helped bring millions of dollars to Bemidji to build a new veterans home, opened the way to building more homes in Beltrami County, and secured pandemic relief funding for businesses. As a community member I lead the effort to open two emergency shelters—where I now work fulltime to ensure my neighbors have access to basic human needs.

My interest and experience in political policy and networking extends to the

(continued on page 13)

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 2B



Party: DFL
Age: 46
Community:
Bagley

Emily Thabes

decline of the coal and dairy industries. I know the value of rural communities and the culture and economic contribution they bring to a state. I will bring those values, my education, my experience, and my drive to improve life for everyone here to the House.

Why are you running? I was moved to action when bad actors in the federal government terrorized and killed people in our communities while Minnesota's own state representatives looked on, and in some cases egged it on. I could no longer stay out of it. I learned in childhood that people only get through by taking care of each other. I am a librarian by trade, responsible for serving all without asking who 'deserves' help.

This is the standard I want for our government. We are obligated to one another and to the land, and so is our government. I am running to make that obligation real, with fierce joy.

Why should voters elect you? My leadership philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom and excellence in service of others. I live out that philosophy by preserving and sharing our community history, serving on and alongside community organizations, and caring for the land and water I live on.

I live in this district by choice. I show up. I have knocked on doors across seven counties and listened to what people carry: childcare that costs more than a mortgage; health care out of reach for elders and folks with chronic illness; housing nobody can

afford; and farms and resorts alike leaving family hands.

I run a public institution on a tight budget. I believe in transparency and in developing smart systems that keep working when needs change. My campaign is funded by individual donors and organizations whose members share our values. I will bring that accountability to the House and keep communicating after the election.

What are your top three priorities, if elected? Please describe specific policy goals. Care people can access. Childcare families can afford, and providers can survive on, with families choosing the provider that works for them. An elder care ombudsman with real authority. Keeping rural hospitals and clinics open, starting with the unfunded balance on the new Mahnomen facility.

Clean water. Protecting water at the source in the Headwaters, cleaning up the Cass Superfund site, and protecting manoomin as both a treaty obligation and a measure of water health.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Beltrami County Historical Society, Executive Director

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I hold master's degrees in library and information science and in interdisciplinary leadership and have spent most of my career running institutions that answer to the people who fund them. As Executive Director of the Beltrami County Historical Society, I manage the budget, grants, staff, and volunteers, and I guide our board. Every dollar I spend is publicly accounted for. I also worked on Capital One's fraud team, training associates to detect and prevent fraud.

I am the daughter of a nurse practitioner, a teacher, and a career veteran. I grew up in a rural West Virginia farming community depressed by the

(continued on page 13)

MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE CONTINUED

Reed J. Olson (continued)

Expand Access to Mental Healthcare in Rural Minnesota

Everyone deserves access to mental healthcare. Too many of our family members needlessly suffer because of a lack of access to mental healthcare, especially in rural Minnesota. We deserve better.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

The Minnesota Legislature needs to be a responsible actor and raise the necessary revenues to administer the State. For too long, the legislature has pushed that responsibility to Counties, who are then forced to raise property taxes. Beware of politicians who say they will lower taxes at the state level. This usually means a drop in collecting revenues from Minnesota's wealthiest and an increase in taxes on you and me.

Emily Thabes (continued)

Cost pressure on households. Local Government Aid and County Program Aid have sat at \$644.4 million since 2024, pushing the difference onto local taxpayers. I would fund both in full and tie them to inflation. More of the money should come through the state formula, so schools are funded equally whether the surrounding property wealth is high or low.

What policies would you champion to help alleviate growing property tax burdens on residents at the local government level?

Your property tax is based on your share of a local budget, and your share depends on what the assessor says your property is worth compared to everyone else's. Three high lakeshore sales can reprice an entire shore and shift costs onto neighbors who never sold anything. Your statement will not show any of that.

I would push for a full review of how the tax is calculated, aimed at a system people can understand and that accounts for ability to pay. Right now, I would expand the refunds people already qualify for and tie them to inflation, spread large valuation increases over several years rather than landing them in a single bill, and simplify the class rates.

The homestead exclusion also demands revision. It lowers one home's taxable value without the state paying for it, so the relief comes off one bill and onto the neighbors.

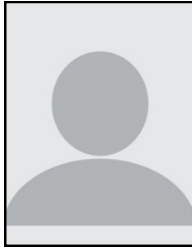


Photo credit: Lorie Shaull

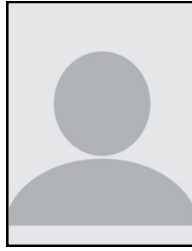
SCHOOL BOARDS

Read more on page 15

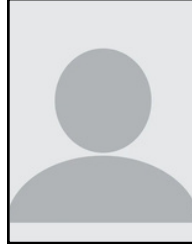
Bemidji School Board (elect 3)



**Colleen
Bakken**



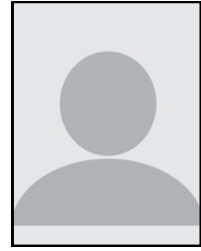
Jenny Frenzel*
Incumbent



**Robert P.
Hagge**

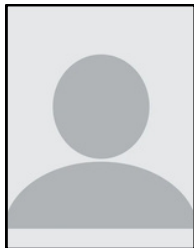


**Carol L.
Johnson**

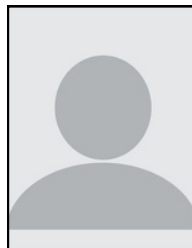


Dave Wall
Incumbent

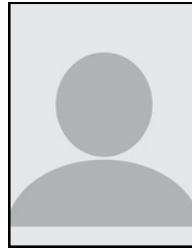
Kelliher School Board (elect 3)



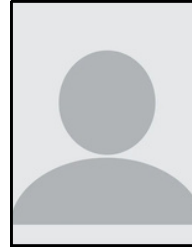
**Frank
Duresky***



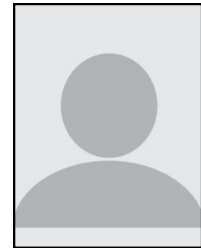
Jacob Neft*
Incumbent



Chris Nistler*



**Devin
Rennemo***



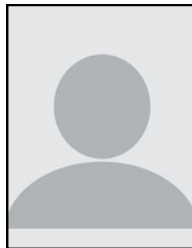
Mary Thayer*
Incumbent

Red Lake School Board (elect 4)

Read more on page 19



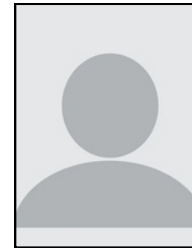
Vestanna Cook



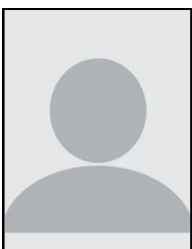
Ryan Holthusen*



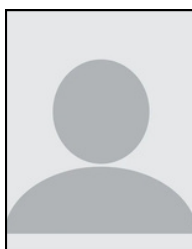
Sharon Kingbird



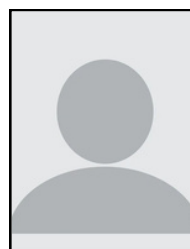
Deanna Pemberton*



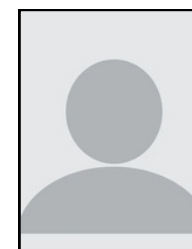
**Robert
Pemberton Sr.***



**Jennifer
Schoenborn**

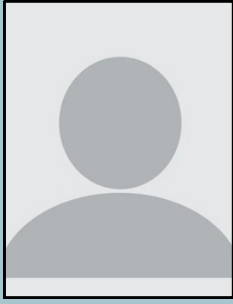


Tina Stately*
Incumbent



**Dustin
Thunder-Harris***

*Candidate did not
respond to KAXE's survey.



Age: 63

Colleen Bakken

Why should voters elect you? I bring not only significant business experience, but understanding in our public education systems. This experience blended with years of building community partnerships has deepened my commitment to see our school systems strengthened knowing our communities are stronger when we invest and support our school systems. I will bring a value of representation at the table and working together for successful outcomes.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected?

Continued fiscal commitment while reaching further in growing resources that allow the school to move beyond operational crisis. Building out the next level of school organizational health and the resource commitment to accomplish this next growth phase. While significantly challenged by funding changes and cuts, we are able to take schools to a path where resiliency is embraced as a passed lesson from crisis paving the way for healthy systems and growth with a new understanding and forward empowered vision.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Harmony Food Co-op, General Manager

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. 33 years of business experience, 33 years of building local community partnerships, experience serving and leading Bemidji Board and Committee work, education experience teaching adjunct at BSU, teaching and advocacy work in alternative education. Bachelor of Science degree in English Teaching, Master's degree in English.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Former MN Senator Paul Wellstone. He represented the common person, he was a doer not just a talker, and I am committed to living out his belief that "We all do better, when we all do better".

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals.

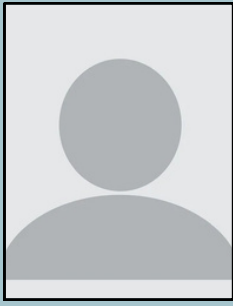
Continue balancing the fiscal budget while seeking strategic revenue and expense saving opportunities that further stabilize the District resources in order to grow and better serve students, staff, and the community. Community commitment and engagement with the school that strengthens the interactive capacity between schools and their community. Representation of ideas, concerns, and continued vision that is built on existing service work but continues to reach further and serve all.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member?

The district navigating significant deficit over the past three years accomplishing a projected balanced budget for 2026-2027 school year.

Why are you running? I believe passionately in Public Education! It is where our children grow essential knowledge, learn critical civil engagement, and are guided by experienced professionals to navigate social community life skills.

BEMIDJI SCHOOL BOARD



Age: 71

Robert P. Hagge

Why are you running? I'm running for school board because I care about the future of our students and our community. Running a business for many years has also taught me the importance of living within a budget, setting priorities, and making thoughtful decisions about where money is spent. Our district has limited resources, and I believe we need to make sure those dollars are being used wisely and where they can have the greatest impact on students and teachers.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. I don't have a personal agenda. I want to ask good questions, listen to parents and teachers, and be responsible with taxpayer dollars.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected?

I believe the biggest challenge is the decline in enrollment since COVID, which also means loss of funding. We need to understand why families are choosing other options and work to earn and maintain their trust in our public schools.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member?

Bemidji has some test scores that are above state average, and that's something we should be proud of. But there are also areas where we can do better. Particularly reading and graduation rates. I think we should look at what is working, build on it, and keep finding ways to help more of our students succeed.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Bob and Jill's Drive and Buy

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I am a graduate of Bemidji State University where I received my Bachelor's Degree in Education and my license in Special Education. I've been privileged to teach in the Bemidji, Red Lake, and Cass Lake school districts, and have also worked with families as a home-based counselor at Upper Mississippi Mental Health Services. I raised four daughters who graduated from Bemidji schools and currently have two grandsons attending school in Bemidji. I believe my background will allow me to be an ally and advocate for parents, students, and teachers.

Why should voters elect you? I bring experience, common sense, and a genuine concern for the families in our district. I've spent a lot of my life working with young people and families, and as a longtime local business owner, I understand the importance of listening, being accountable, and making responsible decisions. I want to keep the focus on student success, support our teachers, listen to families, and make sure taxpayer dollars are being used wisely.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. I admire Abraham Lincoln for his perseverance and ability to lead through difficult circumstances.



Read more answers from the candidates at kaxe.org/electionguide

BEMIDJI SCHOOL BOARD

Carol L. Johnson



Age: 68

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Retired from Ken K. Thompson Jewelry. Currently employed at Sanford Health as a Cafeteria Cashier. Private Piano Teacher.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I was a member of the Bemidji Jaycee Women for many years. Service to community is important to me. I learned leadership skills and chaired many projects. I served as a Director, Secretary, Vice President and President after years of experience. I have been fortunate to combine my BSU education in business and music in my career path. I have been a private piano teacher for over 40 years and share my music in the community accompanying the First City Singers and Bemidji Community Theatre musical productions and serving as co-director of the First City Handbell Choir. I have played clarinet in the Bemidji Area Community Band for over 40 years.

Why are you running? I am a strong advocate of public education and Bemidji Area Schools. I support staff and students. I want to give back in a positive way as my Johnson family has four generations of BHS graduates. I currently have four great nieces and one great nephew attending Bemidji Area Schools. I feel that all children deserve a quality education and is what Bemidji Area Schools provides.

Why should voters elect you? I bring 18 years of experience serving on the Bemidji School Board. I was a dedicated board member in the past and I will be in the future. If it is board related, I will be there. I believe if you sign up, you show up. I am very protective of our district. I feel that the Minnesota School Board Association provides excellent opportunities for learning and networking with other district. I was awarded the Presidents Award from MSBA in 2019.

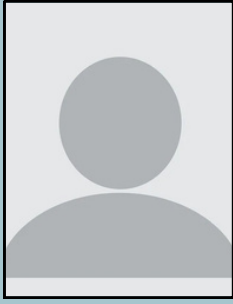
Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Dolly Parton is a genuine caring person who never forgot her humble beginnings. She had a vision and goals. She persevered and became a beloved entertainer and humanitarian. She shared her music all over the world. She shared her wealth on causes she believed in. Most notably, the Imagination Library, putting millions of books into the hands of millions of children.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. I believe we need to promote Bemidji Area Schools and the opportunities offered. The basics and beyond, Academics, Arts, Athletics, varied curriculum fostered by an exemplary staff. I also believe that we need to increase dialogue with our legislators regarding education funding. Bemidji Day at the Capitol provides board members that opportunity.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected? We have limited resources. Transportation is an unfunded mandate. The ask is to just make us whole. Imagine what we could do with the approximately one million dollar cost to transport our students to school. Declining enrollment is a challenge. Again, promote our district and all the opportunities we provide for students.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member? The READ Act. I appreciate the effort of numerous staff in the preparation and implementation. Reading is the core of education.

BEMIDJI SCHOOL BOARD



Age: 60

Dave Wall

2. Fiscal responsibility – we will reach the goal of eliminating an operating deficit in 2027.

3. Enrollment – this has been a challenge due to a couple of factors. First demographics: we have a declining birthrate in the district which is impacting our district with a short fall of approximately 50 students. Secondly, confidence in public education is waning. My goal is to make public education competitive and win back the confidence of parents and allow the district to assist families by providing quality education.

Editor's note: Bemidji's four-year graduation rate was 80.2% in 2025, up 9.9% since 2022. The graduation rate for Native American students was 59.8%, up 16.9% from 2022.

Why should voters elect you?

I promote the goals of the school district to provide quality education, I promote fiscal responsibility with public funds, and I believe the school district can assist family in the education of their children.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

Pete Hegseth - I believe he has really turned around the mission of the military to focus on what it is there for. He has also returned a merit based qualification for military service.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. To see the academic resilience of the district to continue to increase. This means to breakaway from state averages and excel in all areas of academics in the district. To operate in fiscally responsible without adding more tax burden to constituents. To increase enrollment by rebuilding the confidence of parents in public education.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected?

Enrollment is the biggest challenge as that is where our main revenue source comes from. Again, confidence needs to be rebuilt among families in the district.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member?

Graduation rates are up 9% among all students and 16.9% among Native American students.

See previous editor's note.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Northern Bible Church - Pastor

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Current school board member, experience in personnel management, director roles in companies. Bachelor of Religious Education, BA in Linguistics/Anthropology

Why are you running? My decision to run again is the fact that we have a good trajectory happening in the school district:
1. Academic trajectory of the district is on the increase – this is a direct result of working toward what the school district is there for: education of kids. Graduation rates among all students are up 9% and 16.9% among Native Americans.



Age: 34

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role?

I have been employed with Ombimindwaa Gidinawemaaganinaadog for the last 9 years. I am currently the Program Manager for the Waabinoowigamig Binesii Waadiswan (WBW) program. The WBW program is Ombi's first Adult Foster home. We provide services for those on a CADI waiver and an Elderly waiver. Before stepping into this role in May 2026, I worked in our Intake and Response (Child Protection) department.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.

I've worked with youth all of my adult life. I coached Junior High girls basketball since 2012 and that was my first job. I just recently resigned from that position in Oct. 2025. I have an Associates degree in Liberal Arts and a Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise Science with an emphasis in Medical Fitness. I believe I am

Vestanna Cook

qualified because I am apart of the community, not only do I live here, I participate. I see people the way I see myself; I see other people's children the way I see my own.

Why are you running? I am running for school board because I know we need change. The community needs someone who listens, someone who holds accountability to the highest standard, someone who includes ALL children, and someone who cares. I believe I can be that person. I am a special needs parent. Our children with disabilities are often overlooked/ forgotten in the school system and we need to do right by them. As a special needs parent, I am also often overlooked. I want the best for all of our children, neurotypical or neurodivergent, our children deserve all of the opportunities and to be treated fairly.

Why should voters elect you? Voters should elect me because I make sure things get accomplished. I make sure the community, the parents, the teachers/staff and the youth are seen. Most importantly, I listen. I will make sure to have a professional relationship with all students and staff within the school district. I will be present in the schools to maintain those professional relationships. I will make sure the community has a seat at the table. I will provide transparency, updates on meetings and pressing issues. I will make sure the community feels welcome.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Vernelle Lussier -

Red Lake Tribal Treasurer. I admire Vernelle because all of the things she has campaigned on, she has followed through. She is transparent, she is empathetic and she is really making a difference for the future generations. Vernelle is smart, kind, personable, outgoing, easy to talk to, understanding, and transparent. Vernelle has always been someone I looked up to since I was in High School and I am so proud to know her.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. If elected, my top priorities would be to provide clear communication, accountability, being a voice for special needs students and their parents, and being more involved with the community.

- Clear Communication - I will be transparent when asked questions unless it is something I cannot discuss.
- Accountability - I will uphold the policies surrounding this topic.
- Being a voice for Special Needs Students and their parents - I will continue to advocate for fair opportunities for our special needs families. I will get training offered to the community and our families, eg: how to read IEPs.

(continued on page 22)



Age: 67

Sharon Kingbird

where their well-being and educational goals are supported. Our teachers and staff also deserve the resources and training they need to do their best work - building relationships, empowering students, and honoring the unique identities of every child.

This year, 41 students graduated - the largest graduating class since 2017. that is something our community can be proud of, and I want to see that success continue to grow. Every student should have the opportunity to experience the pride and accomplishment of reaching graduation.

It takes a village to raise our future generations. Through our language, culture, traditions, families and schools, we can help every student succeed.

Miigwech

Why should voters elect you?

I believe voters should choose me because I bring 32 years of experience in education and a genuine commitment to our students and families. I believe every student deserves a quality education and the support they need to reach their educational goals.

Strong schools are built on teamwork. That means open communication between our schools and families from Early Childhood through 12th grade, working together to help every student succeed.

As your school board member, I will be approachable, supportive and ready to listen. I value your ideas, your concerns and your voice, and I will always do my best to represent our community with honesty and respect.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

Dr. Anton "Waagosh" Treuer because of his efforts to revitalize the Ojibwe language, spirituality and culture. He is a great role model for a whole generation of young Anishinaabeg. He is known for the many books that he has written on native culture and language and has presented at conferences and gatherings throughout the United States on this topic.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals.

My priorities are the students and being available to families and my goal is to have more contact with students and families. Another priority is to continue the rise in graduation rates, my goal is looking at and maintain what has been successful and work on what needs to be improved. Another priority are the many students who have left our district, I would like to identify who they are, gather data with the ultimate goal of retaining them back to our district.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected?

The biggest challenge to me is community and school communication.

(continued on page 22)

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role?

Retired Ojibwe culturist teacher

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.

I have been in education for the past 32 years, until May 2026, I was an Ojibwe culturist. My experiences/education include Ojibwe language and culture teacher in Red Lake and Bemidji middle school, home/school advocate, parent committee member, mentor, reading tutor and attended National Indian Education Association and Minnesota Indian Education Association for several years. I have received my Ojibwe eminence license and psychology degree.

Why are you running? I am running for School Board because education matters. Every student who walks through our doors should feel welcomed, valued, and have a sense of belonging. Our students deserve a safe, healthy learning environment

RED LAKE SCHOOL BOARD



Age: 42

Jennifer Schoenborn

Community Health Worker certificate.
I am able to organize public events.

Why are you running? I would like to serve my community further by being a school board member. I would like to be a voice for our youth, families and community members. I am strongly invested in my communities wellbeing and this extends to the school that educates them. I would like to share my idea's and knowledge to help guide the school districts educational policies. I want to represent my tribal community and support the school to reflect and honor our traditional values.

Why should voters elect you? I would proudly represent our tribe and make sure our voices are heard. I am a very open minded person and am always listening to learn. I am non-bias and I work well with others. I am a good listener, a strong advocate and I am not afraid to speak up on issues. I am able to make tough decisions. I and my family are passionate about being involved with my community.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. I admire Deb Haaland because she achieved many goals because of her hard work and dedication.

What are your priorities, if elected? Please describe specific goals. The graduation rate is low, I would like to understand why and help students over come barriers they may face to preventing them from being successful students and into adulthood. I would like to see the practices of the school come from a trauma informed lens to create a safe,

caring and supportive environment. I want to see support and prioritization of student wellbeing with more drug and suicide prevention within the school district.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected?

I would like to see our graduation rate increase. Our students face many challenges. I believe improving the environment with in the school so students feel understood, valued and truly supported will increase the number of students who make it to graduation. I would like to connect students and families to resources in the community and help them achieve educational goals.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member? It was wonderful to see the large graduating class this year. I believe a wonderful strength of the school currently is the access students have to mental health supports. Red Lake Comprehensive Health has grown their school based wellness counseling supports services. This is unique for students to have a large number of counselors and quick access to support.

(continued on page 22)

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? I work for Red Lake Comprehensive Health Services as a school based Wellness Counselor. I am also a Mental Health Practitioner on the Crisis Response team

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I have worked with the youth on the Red Lake Nation for almost two decades, in varying roles with in my community. I have been a school based Wellness Counselor at the Secondary Complex for over 10 years. I am passionate about supporting and advocating for our students. I work closely with school staff and have the unique opportunity to understand the policy and practices of the school District. I have always valued education, I was valedictorian of my graduating class from Red Lake High School. I went on to get my Associates of Arts degree and have completed additional college classes towards finishing my degree. I also have my

SCHOOL BOARD CONTINUED

Vestanna Cook (continued)

What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing your district, and how do you plan to address it if elected?

I believe the biggest challenge is the lack of upholding policies, the ability to follow through and not updating the community on new things happening within the school. I plan to stick to policy, implement new ones if old ones aren't working and I will not bend rules. I will provide follow through on every issue I address or that is brought to my attention. I will keep the community updated on the things that go on within the school because I believe parents have the right to know anything that involves their children.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member?

The one success I would offer support to as a school board member is the new level 4 ASD program that is currently being built. It is a program that will be designed specifically for children K-12 on the Autism Spectrum. It will be made for children who are our most vulnerable and require substantial care even while at school. It will have a sensory room, a mock apartment to teach independent living skills for the older children. It will be finished with construction in Winter of 2026 and will be open for enrollment for the 2027-2028 school year.

Sharon Kingbird (continued)

How this can be addressed is by a greater response time of communication between parents and school staff, having school/community gatherings and possible student lead activities.

What is one success in the district that you would offer support for as a board member?

One success has been implementing Ojibwe language and culture into the classrooms, and throughout the building and I will continue to support and advocate for this success.

Jennifer Schoenborn (continued)

I would also like to see more of our children go to college and increased encouragement for continuing their education reflected in the school. I would like to see how the school board can help motivate students further their education after graduation.



Photo credit: Lorie Shaull

BELTRAMI COUNTY BOARD DISTRICT 1



Craig Gaasvig
Incumbent



Ann Skoe

BELTRAMI COUNTY BOARD DISTRICT 1



Age: 58
Community:
Bemidji

Craig Gaasvig

years to help our County through these tough financial times. The unfunded State mandates that are pushed down to our local taxpayers is a huge challenge that requires tough decisions. My record shows that I can make those tough decisions and be as fiscally responsible as possible, while still providing the services that our community needs.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. On this 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation, and having recently seen the movie Young Washington, I'd say that George Washington is a leader that I admire. He was a very driven young man that was guided by self-discipline and strategic clarity. Those qualities are what enabled him to become our first President and one of the most influential Founding Fathers of the United States of America.

What are the three biggest issues your county is facing? Unfunded mandates from the State, small tax base, and impoverished community.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

We need to grow our tax base by getting public property back on the tax roles, increasing housing for all income levels and age groups. Less than 25% of Beltrami County is taxable, so the more we can grow our housing (which studies show we are drastically in need of), the more we can spread the tax burden and ultimately reduce the impact to all residents.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Beltrami County Commissioner

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. The past 8 years as a Beltrami County Commissioner have provided me with a tremendous amount of education and experience. I have gained a lot of knowledge about the County's budget, departments, and all of the other boards that are part of the role as Commissioner. Our area's State legislators know me well and work with me to try to get things accomplished at the State level to help Beltrami County.

Why are you running? I am running again because I want to utilize the knowledge that I've invested in over the past 8

Why should voters elect you? I apply common sense to our local government. I am easily reached by phone, text, email or in person. I do my best to educate myself about all sides of the issues, listen to constituents, and then make decisions based on logic and common sense. Part of being a Commissioner involves serving on other related boards and committees. I am currently serving as the Chair of several of those boards, Cass Lake Rural Fire Association, Headwaters Regional Development Commission, Blackduck EMS Tri-County Ambulance Board, Headwaters One Watershed One Plan, and Joint Airport Zoning Board to name a few. I feel I have been elected as Chair of these boards and Vice-Chair of others because I study the material prior to meetings, show up, and consistently contribute.

BELTRAMI COUNTY BOARD DISTRICT 1



Age: 55

Community:

Frohn Township, east of Bemidji

Ann Skoe

amazing teams. I have also grown knowledgeable about public relations, marketing, and property/facilities management. As president of a charter school board, I learned to follow proper procedures and to hold effective meetings. Working with Peacemaker Resources, I developed skills in trauma-informed leadership and supported both in-home and center-based childcare.

county board oversees a wide array of services, and I am committed to understanding them all and ensuring each one is functioning at its best. I welcome having my ideas challenged through research and discussion. I dare to work through contention and build connection. Yet my moral backbone keeps me standing firm for justice even when a decision is unpopular.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? I am a teacher, and like many in our county, I quilt my living together from several different roles.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Frohn Township has been my home since 1995. My Minnesota roots are deep, and lived experience has also given me a broad perspective of the world. As a licensed teacher, I have worked in many educational settings in this region. My late husband and I raised 3 children as we guided people of all ages to learn languages and to become comfortable with the challenge of building community with people of different cultures, backgrounds, and orientations. For more than 35 years of working with the Concordia Language Villages, I have managed tight budgets and recruited and developed

Why are you running? This past spring I worked with a group of preschoolers called the Bears. Whenever we returned to the room from a meal or from playing outside, we said together, "Bears are brave, and Bears are caring." When my community asked me to run for this office, it was clear to me that serving as county commissioner is how I can be brave and caring. I want to take the many layers of grief that I have felt and turn them into positive action. It is time for me to do my shift of the work it takes to keep our county running well.

Why should voters elect you? My dear neighbors, I will fight and work for you unrelentingly, commit the time, and dedicate my energy to accomplish what need and want as a thriving county. I will listen carefully to all of my constituents and approach differences of opinion with curiosity and compassion. While I am adept at understanding how parts of a system must work together to function well, I know that it is important to seek and consider the advice of experts. The

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

I admire Laddie Elwell, founder of the Headwaters Science Center, for her dedication to our community. She made amazing things happen on very small budgets through her inspiring vision, unmatched frugality, and skillful grant writing. She treated all people with dignity, and her integrity never wavered.

What are the three biggest issues your county is facing?

1. The erosion of confidence in our government.
2. Costs are rising, but funds are not.
3. The interrelated issues of lack of economic stability, social disconnection, inadequate mental and physical health care, insufficient childcare and housing, substance abuse, violence, and property crime.

(continued on page 26)

BELTRAMI COUNTY BOARD CONTINUED

Ann Skoe (continued)

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

The erosion of confidence in our government is the greatest issue facing the county. Taxpayers need to see that their hard-earned money is not squandered. We need to know that our elections are safe, fair, and that they matter. Residents must experience that public safety is actually ensuring the safety of the public. Transparency and clear communication are both vital in rebuilding this trust. A county commissioner is a nonpartisan position. Their duty is to represent everyone in their district. When a voter's voice is heard, it encourages them to continue to engage in our government. This is necessary for a healthy democracy. I aim to alleviate fears so that good solutions can be implemented through clear thinking. This will ensure that our community thrives.

What happens after you vote?

- In-person ballots, cast on Election Day, are typically counted quickly, often by machine.
- In Minnesota, mail-in and absentee ballots begin processing 18 days before the election but are not counted until after polls close at 8 p.m. on Election Day.
- Following Election Day, county election officials audit and proof their work to make any corrections as necessary before they canvass their results. It is routine for election officials to discover small errors or typos, such as entering the number 48 instead of 84.
- Election results are not official until they have been reviewed and certified by a canvassing board. If necessary, the canvassing board oversees a recount. Canvassing boards are also involved in the process of randomly selecting precincts for review after every election.
- Canvassing boards convene at the municipal, school district and county levels. Statewide races and those crossing county lines are certified by the State Canvassing Board.
- The county canvass report is sent to the Secretary of State's office, where it is reviewed and presented to the State Canvassing Board.
- Election results aren't final until they're certified, a process that varies by state. The State Canvassing Board will meet to certify results on Nov. 19.

CITY OFFICES

Bemidji City Council

At Large



Ron Johnson



Audrey M. Thayer
Incumbent

Ward 2



Kate Egelhof



Josh Peterson
Incumbent

Ward 4



Misty Bray



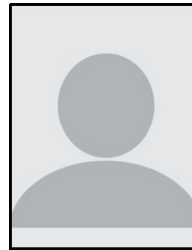
Emelie Rivera
Incumbent

Read more on page 28

Northern City Council (elect 2)



Curt Blumhagen



Brian Giauque*



Ken Glidden



Ryan Grow



Drew Hildenbrand



Deena Monk-Kobow

Read more on page 36

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

BEMIDJI CITY COUNCIL AT-LARGE



Age: 75

Audrey M. Thayer

perspective on leadership, community engagement, organizational development, and education. The most important is I am community wise and street smart.

Why are you running? I am seeking this opportunity to serve because I believe public service advances the common good. Every community member has a role to play in contributing to society and supporting collective goals. By fostering cooperation, responsibility, and engagement, we can address challenges and create lasting improvements for everyone.

Why should voters elect you? I am committed to serving Bemidji's people with honesty, integrity, and compassion. I value all people, celebrate cultural diversity, and believe every citizen deserves to be heard and respected. I will be a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars and a leader who acts with moral courage and transparency.

I understand the critical relationships between federal, state, tribal, and local governments and the work required to help Bemidji thrive. Together, we can build a stronger community that reflects the voices and values of all its citizens.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. I believe any public leader is a public servant. They may serve with government entities, businesses, nonprofits, churches, and on our reservations. I think of the sanitation worker who knows the

alleys and streets of our city, ensuring that services reach all citizens. Public servants value keeping society functioning smoothly ensuring that all services reach all citizens fairly, especially the underserved. I admire hard working, community service leaders.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

Housing is one of the most pressing needs. We need to think critically about strategies that effectively address housing shortages. We also need to actively engage residents and stakeholders to shift perceptions. The city needs more opportunities in economic development. Public Safety. Everyone in our city must feel safe.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected? The issues are all interrelated. Address just three; each has related issues that create more.

Housing - Housing cannot be viewed in isolation. Our city faces broader challenges related to income levels, workforce opportunities, transportation, childcare, and access to education and training.

(continued on page 34)

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? I am currently employed at Leech Lake Tribal College as an instructor in Arts and Humanities, the Indigenous Leadership Program. I am also an author and community activist.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. My professional experience spans higher education, business, tribal communities, and the nonprofit sector. I earned my bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota, where I studied Native American Studies with minors in Sociology and Urban and Regional Planning. I later earned a Master of Education from Cambridge College, specializing in Counseling Psychology. I also pursued doctoral studies in Leadership and Organizational Management and reached ABD (All But Dissertation) status. These academic and professional experiences have provided me with a broad

BEMIDJI CITY COUNCIL AT-LARGE



Age: 76

Ron Johnson

Directors for 20 years and served as President in 2018-2019

I was a member of the League of Minnesota Cities Board of Directors for 8.5 years and served as President in 2022-2023

Graduate of the Blandin Community Leadership Program - 2003, 2004
Graduate of the Northwest Minnesota Foundation Community Leadership Program - 1994

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. My 24 years on the city council and particularly my statewide leadership experience has afforded me the opportunity to meet many extraordinary public leaders. One leader, however, that stands out for me is current Bemidji Mayor Jorge Prince. I served with Mayor Prince for four years including as his Mayor Pro Tem. Jorge has many attributes that make him a strong mayor but the things I admire most is that he's an articulate, transparent mayor who prioritizes community well being. He actively listens to his constituents ensuring they feel heard and understood. Jorge was recently name the 2026 recipient of the Tommy Longo Disaster Leadership Award (a national honor) for his leadership during Bemidji's 2025 devastating Derecho. Jorge is truly great Mayor and I'm proud to call him my friend.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

Public Safety
Affordable Housing
Living Wage Jobs

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? I was employed by

Lakeland Public Television as their Design/Promotion Manager for 43 years. Retire in 2023.for 43 (Design/Prol was employed by Lakeland Public Television as their motion Manager) for 43 years. Retired in 2023

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Education:

I am a graduate of Bemidji State University, Alexandria Technical College and Brown Institute of Minneapolis. I am a former adjunct faculty member in the Visual Arts Department at Bemidji State University. I was named a Bemidji State University Outstanding Alumni in 2010
Leadership Experience:
I have 24 years experience serving on the Bemidji City Council representing Ward 3 from 2001 to 2024
I was a member of the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities Board of

Why are you running? My time on the city council ended in 2024. Do to redistricting, I was not eligible to run for my my Ward 3 seat that I had represented since 2001.

After two years out of city government, I am energized and looking forward to the opportunity to represent all five Bemidji Wards on the city council. I had a great run and played an important role in many significant accomplishments for Bemidji during my first stint on the council. However, there is important work yet to be done as we continue building a better Bemidji and I would appreciate an opportunity to once again be part of it.

Why should voters elect you?

I am a lifelong resident of Bemidji. I was born and raised in Bemidji and I'm a graduate of Bemidji High School. Over my lifetime, my immediate family has lived in all five Bemidji wards so I know Bemidji very well. I feel my statewide leadership experience combined with 24 years of city council experience makes me well qualified to be the next At-Large Council Mamber for the great city of Bemidji.

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BEMIDJI CITY COUNCIL

WARD 2



Age: 42

Kate Egelhof

Why are you running? I would like to see more attention paid to issues facing renters and lower-income residents like housing and public transit.

Why should voters elect you? I am a non-politician and renter who will focus my efforts on the needs of people being overlooked in local decision-making.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. I am really enjoying seeing how NYC Mayor Mamdani is working to make life accessible for all residents of all income levels, from transit to childcare, as well as how approachable he is for citizens.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing? Housing, public transit, mental health/substance abuse

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected? Public transit. I would like to see the development of a regular public bus route within city limits and to look into available grant funding.

What steps, if any, would you take to support or oppose data centers? I firmly oppose data centers and would look to place a moratorium on any within city limits by any possible legislation.

Many Northern Minnesota cities are experiencing tightening budgets. Where would you propose making cuts, if needed? I would prefer to explore any other alternatives first.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Legal assistant at Fuller and Wallner

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I am a former librarian at Bemidji Public Library with a firsthand view of major issues facing residents.



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BEMIDJI CITY COUNCIL

WARD 2



Age: 45

Josh Peterson

project, the implementation of a city budget committee and start the process of the downtown redevelopment project.

We need to grow our tax base without raising taxes and keep finding ways to make Bemidji competitive. We need to finish our city comprehensive plan and redo our city ordinances and, in some cases, de-regulate the requirements on homeowners and developers and instead incentivize to do some of what we require now. This in turn will help attract business, and developers to build additional workforce/affordable housing which is a great need in Bemidji.

We need to continue our efforts on making Bemidji business friendly. I also will continue the fight to lower Bemidji's property taxes. I have consistently voted no four out of 6 years served on tax levy increases.

Why should voters elect you?

During my time on city council, I have helped guarantee Bemidji's future through the expansion of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Water Treatment Plant. I supported the efforts to clean up our Railroad Corridor "brownfield" which paved the way for our YMCA & new hotel developments. I have also supported our derecho storm response and recovery. I supported the effort in establishing partnerships such as the relaunch of the Nielson Fieldhouse, Tourist Information Center, the Bemidji Community Arena and with Bemidji State University.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

When looking at public leaders I see teachers in that role. One of those teachers would be my father who continues to teach even after retiring from the public school system. He continues to serve as an art educator all while staying committed to his faith, family, and students.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

Strengthening Bemidji through expanded tax base by creating affordable housing while lowering property taxes. Public safety, providing necessary resources for police and fire departments. Also protecting our natural resources by protecting our lakes and rivers and safeguard / maintaining our parks and trails.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

Spurring new development and housing can be accomplished once we finish our city comprehensive plan and redo our city ordinances to create less of a burden on developers and homeowners. We should and instead incentivize rather than require developers to do some of what we require now.

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Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Visit Bemidji, Executive Director

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Graduated from Bemidji High School in 2000 and Bemidji State University in 2004 with a degree in broadcast journalism and also worked on a second degree at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities in Political Science while lettering in cheerleading in 2007. I am currently the Executive Director of the First City of Lights Foundation and Night We Light Celebration organizer. I am also a two-time President of the Bemidji Jaycees and a 3-time Water Carnival Chairman. I also serve on both the Worship Team and Alignment Team as a member of Bemidji Covenant Church.

Why are you running? I want to see the projects we have started through to the finish line. Such as the Railroad corridor redevelopment

BEMIDJI CITY COUNCIL

WARD 4



Age: 47

Misty Bray

Why should voters elect you?

I am an out of the box thinker, who understands the problems our city is facing and have the skills to help shape healthy city government. This includes collaboration and partnerships with other government entities, agencies, businesses, and most importantly, citizens. I am a fiscal conservative who will be a good steward of your tax dollars. I listen to my constituents, I respond, and I follow through.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

I admire Denae Alamano. As executive director of the United Way she serves some of our most vulnerable citizens in creative, compassionate, and accountable ways. I have worked closely with her on community projects and have seen firsthand her ability to look at the person behind the person with respect and empathy. She is not afraid to take on challenges and inspires us all to do better together.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

First, there are not enough businesses within the city limits to provide an adequate, stable tax base. This results in pressure to raise taxes on city residents. Second, we have a lack of adequate housing for all income levels. Finally, we have public safety issues that need to be addressed.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

Number one. A healthy mix of corporate and small business is essential to increasing the tax base. We need to

remove planning and zoning barriers that have caused businesses to locate outside the city limits. We need to put tax exempt properties back on the tax rolls. Enabling housing development on these properties is another step toward increasing the tax base and attracting new businesses and their employees to our community, further increasing the tax base and improving services for all our citizens.

What steps, if any, would you take to support or oppose data centers?

I am concerned about the impact of data centers on our environment as well as water and electricity supplies. I support a moratorium on data centers in the city of Bemidji.

Many Northern Minnesota cities are experiencing tightening budgets. Where would you propose making cuts, if needed? Our budget in Bemidji is bare bones. We must look for creative ways to increase revenue rather than focus on cutting. This includes getting our fair share of state and federal money by lobbying and seeking grants. It is the responsibility of the council to make difficult decisions about spending. I am prepared to do my homework, participate in constructive discussions, and collaborate to make the best decisions for our community.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Prefer not to answer

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.

I graduated from Oak Hills with B.A.'s in Biblical Studies and youth ministries, leadership education and counseling, I have served in many community advocacy roles, including support for families experiencing domestic violence, crisis housing, veterans support and services for vulnerable and disabled adults and children. I have experience in program development and grant writing. Having experienced homelessness, home ownership, and everything in between, I bring lived experience to my work.

Why are you running? I am running because I want to be a voice for all of Bemidji's citizens, especially those who are rarely heard. I want to do my part to help make Bemidji a place where people live, work, and play in a safe, beautiful, and friendly environment.

BEMIDJI CITY COUNCIL

WARD 4



Age: 51

Emelie Rivera

solutions. I am always sitting and listening and focused on finding solutions.

Why are you running? We are not alone in the issues facing Bemidji. Public safety, affordable housing, transportation, economic conditions, and aging infrastructure are concerns in many communities. The difference is this is the city that I love and whose conditions I am invested in improving. I was born in Bemidji and now my granddaughter is almost a teenager and talking about her future here. We are a city filled with great people and perspectives and we do not always agree. I want to ensure the residents and environment are considered as we work to shape the future of our city, how it looks, and how it operates. By evaluating the rules and ordinances that guide development, we can preserve what we love about our city while continuing to grow. I feel like we lost so much in the 2025 derecho and I want to be very intentional as we rebuild for the future.

Why should voters elect you? I am committed to fulfilling the responsibilities as a council member. I ask questions, challenge others, and advocate for what I believe is in the best interests of all, but particularly those in Ward 4. I focus on the issues, operating from a place of good intentions, not ideology. I want to complete the process of updating the comprehensive plan and ordinances in a way that helps alleviate development barriers and reduces red tape, while still considering the

environmental and human impact. I support investing in the personnel and infrastructure needed for effective public safety and emergency services. For me, being a member of the City Council is an opportunity to guide development by bringing forward the underrepresented voices to the decision-making table.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Dolly Parton, she lived a life that uplifted children and communities with humility, humor, and grace.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing? Poverty, lack of affordable housing, public safety

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected? Increasing access to affordable housing. To attract developers, there have to be spaces ready to build, and Bemidji needs to increase the reach of its infrastructure to spur development. I would like to reduce barriers to owner-occupied rentals, which would potentially increase the number of units available.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Minnesota Department of Human Services as an Equal Opportunity Investigator/Consultant

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. My experience as a Social Worker keeps me looking for the root-cause of issues that persist in our community and focused on seeking solutions. Social work is about helping people. My understanding of complex social issues is informed by the people doing their best to live in our city. My education and training help me approach the work of seeking long-term solutions with a focus on strengths and needs. I have firsthand experience seeing and hearing how policies impact vulnerable populations and our environment. I understand how building consensus and coalitions is necessary to achieve common goals. Life has taught many of us that applying quick surface fixes does not make for long term

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Audrey M. Thayer (continued)

Promotion of sustainability - it takes care of our natural resources; it is unknown to many the importance of conserving what we have; and it is cost-effective in the long run to move our city into many ways of sustainability. Citizens who are unheard in our city. Citizen participation is full of challenges; government often shapes and controls it, leaving our people with little influence. I believe in bottom-up. Local Business. Local businesses are a grassroots economic engine for any city.

What steps, if any, would you take to support or oppose data centers?

I oppose data centers due to their high resource consumption of water and land, the environmental impact of our beautiful northern Minnesota and the economic benefits overall. We must be mindful and think ahead of what the cost will be for future generations.

Many Northern Minnesota cities are experiencing tightening budgets. Where would you propose making cuts, if needed?

Tax Levies must remain low, and our community must find new ways to help keep costs from escalating. That is a huge statement. It will require advocacy at the state and federal levels, working with our legislators, to address not only business but also all the issues within our city. Currently, nonprofit organizations, tribal organizations, and churches provide as much as possible to meet some of our social needs. We must do more.

Ron Johnson (continued)

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

All three are inter-related... but I believe solving the housing issue will attract economic growth and better paying jobs. When businesses look to expand or relocate to a community, the first thing they look at is available housing. A strong housing market is key to a strong job market. Good jobs and affordable housing is key to reducing crime and improving public safety. So affordable housing is most important. There are many state and federal grants available to cities for various types of housing. Also, the city could take steps to revise its strict local ordinances, eliminate zoning bottlenecks and create a more developer friendly environment.

What steps, if any, would you take to support or oppose data centers?

Data centers are certainly a hot topic nationwide but (so far) they have not been an issue for the Bemidji area. I don't currently have a strong opinion either for or against them. Data centers are not going away but I do believe they will continue to become more efficient over time which could lessen environmental concerns. Data centers have many pros and cons.. The pros include economic growth, job creation and infrastructure upgrades while the cons include massive energy draw, high water consumption and community/environmental disruption. I was recently discussing data centers with some friends who live in the Washington DC area and it was interesting that they did not have the same concerns that people here in Minnesota have. Most folks seem to understand the need for data centers... they just don't want them in their "backyard".

Many Northern Minnesota cities are experiencing tightening budgets. Where would you propose making cuts, if needed?

During my 24 years on the Bemidji City Council I have been involved with developing 24 annual budgets for the city. It is rare to find a department budget that didn't have line items that couldn't be reduced (or in some instances eliminated) without significant negative impact to service delivery. One specific area I would like to address is the operation of the Sanford Center. I think the city would see a significant savings by managing the Sanford Center in-house (like the City of Mankato) and eliminate the need and expense of a management company.

BEMIDJI CITY COUNCIL CONTINUED

Josh Peterson (continued)

This in turn will help attract business, and developers to potentially build additional workforce/affordable housing.

What steps, if any, would you take to support or oppose data centers?

I believe more research needs to be done on the full impact of large-scale data centers, and I supported placing a moratorium on data centers until further research has been completed and we receive further information from the federal and state levels on the impact these facilities can have on communities and their environment.

Many Northern Minnesota cities are experiencing tightening budgets. Where would you propose making cuts, if needed?

Everyone is expected to live within a budget, and a city should do the same. I think there are opportunities to cut our building and planning fees to help encourage new development by creating new tax base without raising taxes. That way we are able to fund the needs of a growing city.

Emelie Rivera (continued)

I would encourage redevelopment grants to improve existing housing stock and find ways to use existing available funding or tax incentives to fill gaps that may be preventing project from getting underway. Completing the comprehensive planning process will ideally assist with streamlining processes perceived as burdensome.

What steps, if any, would you take to support or oppose data centers?

The most effective tool a city has when it comes to the topic of data centers is their zoning code and special-use permits. I would oppose any hyper-scale data center. I support a temporary moratorium to study environmental, noise, energy, and infrastructure impacts. I support the city in developing a rigorous, project-specific review process that will address both water and electricity usage, and the light, water and air pollution of even the smallest proposed data center.

Many Northern Minnesota cities are experiencing tightening budgets. Where would you propose making cuts, if needed?

Try to locate operational efficiencies, such as items on the capital improvement plan that could be postponed. We recently implemented solar projects that will reduce the energy costs of the city. It is not ideal and more of a last step, but an option may be to freeze non-essential hiring or reduce some operations.

NORTHERN CITY COUNCIL



Age: 68

Curt Blumhagen

Why should voters elect you?

I have served on the Northern Township Board for the past 12 years and my primary goal has always been to represent my neighbors and constituents to the best of my ability. We still have some big changes coming and I believe I have the experience and leadership skills to help guide us through them.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

In my opinion, there is no single public leader who stands out to me. I genuinely admire individuals who invest their time and effort in support of our government.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

1. Strategies for urban expansion while preserving the rural character of our city.
2. Collaborative efforts to insure the successful completion of our sewer project.
3. Working and adapting to a tight budget.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

Maintaining the city's rural ambiance while fostering growth is very important to me. I would use my influence and voting power to uphold Northern's residents' aspirations.

What steps, if any, would you take to support or oppose data centers?

Prior to forming an opinion on data centers, I would require extensive research on them.

Many Northern Minnesota cities are experiencing tightening budgets. Where would you propose making cuts, if needed?

There isn't a one-size-fits-all answer to this question. Each city is unique, so the best places to make cuts will depend on their specific needs and will require consideration by each city council.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? I was the Store Manager at Target, but I am now retired.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. I was in many different management roles with Target Corporation and have been a Northern Township Supervisor for the past 12 years.

Why are you running? I am proud to have served on our town board through some difficult changes and would like the opportunity to continue serving as we become a city.

Who is KAXE?

KAXE is a Northern Minnesota community radio station, founded in 1976 with signals in Grand Rapids (91.7), Bemidji (90.5) and Brainerd (89.9). The KAXE News team of five journalists put together this Election Guide. The team includes News Director Chelsey Perkins, Northwest Minnesota Reporter Larissa Donovan, North-Central Minnesota Reporter Megan Buffington, Northeast Minnesota Reporter Emma Krab and Stella Mayerhoff, Report for America corps member covering water and agriculture.

NORTHERN CITY COUNCIL



Age: 81

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Retired, 20 year veteran and present caregiver for my wife of 59 years.

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Life long resident of Northern Township except time deployed serving in the U.S. Navy. Married to my wife Annette for 59 years, have 3 daughters-Laura, Sharon and Molly, 4 grandchildren and 4 great grand children. Faith in God, saved by Jesus Christ, born again by the Holy Spirit. Served 20 years in the U.S. Navy. Served on the Beltrami County Board of Commissioners. Served on the Northern Township Board of Supervisors. Served on the Northern Township Board of Adjustment. Served as Sextant for Northern Township cemetery for 40 years. Served Beltrami County as Alternative Sentencing Coordinator - 15 years. Ordained Minister-served in multiple leadership and ministry roles. School Bus Driver in Northern Township serving public schools and families for 20 years

Kenneth Glidden

Why are you running? I am a lifelong resident of Northern Township, MN and a 20 year U.S. Navy veteran who deeply loves this community. I am running for town council because the direction of our state and country is drifting from the foundations of our Democratic Republic. Recent Islamic influences and socialist advancements threaten the principles that secure our God-given rights. Government was instituted to protect those rights; not to control our lives or property. It must remain limited, yet it always tends to overreach. Establishing Northern on a firm foundation of limited government and individual liberty is essential to the long-term well-being of our residents and future city. I am passionate about preserving our freedoms and will work to keep local government accountable and restrained. I respectfully ask for your vote and your trust to serve Northern in this role.

Why should voters elect you? There are two four-year seats open and six candidates have filed. Kurt Blumhagen currently serves on the Northern Township board and has earned the right to continue. I respectfully encourage you to vote for him for one of those seats. For the remaining seat, I ask only that you give careful consideration to the other five candidates, including me. As a lifelong resident and 20 year Navy veteran, I offer steady judgment, a commitment to limited government, protection of your rights and a deep respect for the people of Northern. I would be honored to earn your trust and your vote.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. Ronald Reagan due to his ability to reach all people through his diplomacy in communication. Martin Luther King Jr due to his passion that we all be seen as equal citizens being judged only by our character.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing? Bringing solutions for our pending sewer development for all residents.

Infiltration of overreaching government control that impacts all areas of our lives. Accountability for increased taxation on the citizens of Northern

All three of these issues coming under honest transparency to the residents by the city council.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected? Our responsibility is to be open and accountable to the citizens of Northern and all three of these issues demand attention and are important to me and my fellow citizens.

What steps, if any, would you take to support or oppose data centers? I would first become informed about data centers and their relevancy to our community.

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NORTHERN CITY COUNCIL

Ryan Grow



Age: 41

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Clearbrook-Gonvick School, Superintendent

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. My experience as a Superintendent working with our local school board and other committees and board of directors through different educational organizations, has prepared me for the position of city council. As a school leader, I also currently serve on the Bemidji Regional Interdistrict Council Board of Directors.

Why are you running? I am running for city council because I have an interest in being a servant leader, as well as leading our city into the future through fiscally responsible decision making.

Why should voters elect you? I have lived in Bemidji for the past 23 years, the last 10 years in Northern Township, so I understand the demographics, challenges, and opportunities that await our newly created city. I believe through my education and experiences working with, and serving on different boards and committees, I am prepared for the position of Northern City Council. I look forward to your support and please vote on Tuesday, November 3rd.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why. I have always respected U.S. Senator Ted Cruz for his willingness, dedication, and knowledge to take on challenging critics and political topics when others may not.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing? Financial stability for the future, long-term sewer and/or water infrastructure plans, and business recruitment.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected? Financial stability is going to be the biggest issue moving forward and I would like to start planning right away for the future. I believe the city will need to explore additional state and federal

revenue streams, as well as grants for small cities. As a city, we need to advocate to our local legislatures the need for increased funding to municipalities, as well as develop plans locally on how revenue can be generated, and make fiscally responsible decisions with expenditures.

What steps, if any, would you take to support or oppose data centers? This would be a decision that would require input from all stakeholders before making a decision either way.

Many Northern Minnesota cities are experiencing tightening budgets. Where would you propose making cuts, if needed? As a school Superintendent, I experience tightening budgets every year. I would take a similar approach as a city council member and consult with the appropriate stakeholders to gather input and facts, then make the best decision necessary based upon the findings. My theory when making such decisions, will be to make as little of an impact to the citizens as possible, while still providing the necessary services they deserve.



Age: 56

Drew Hildenbrand

appreciate the values we hold in this area. I feel I possess the background and experience to organize and plan a new city charter.

Why should voters elect you?

Integrity and accountability have been staples in my career thus far, and I want bring my 35 years of school administration and teaching experience to the newly forming City Council.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

Richard Anderson, Former Beltrami County Commissioner and Bemidji High School principal. Richard continues to possess the old school values of rural Minnesota while also being fiscally conservative. He was able to see the big picture and move ahead on long term projects that will benefit Beltrami County and our school district for many decades. I also appreciate his integrity, sincerity and listening abilities.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

1. Creating a new city charter while managing new and emerging issues.
2. Developing and partnering with MPCA to create an affordable, effective and efficient water treatment system for our Northern residents.
3. Rebuild and repair effective communication with the City of Bemidji.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

Creating a

new city charter and managing emerging issues will take time, patience and perseverance. It will also take extra hours and meetings to address the issues as they arise. I am confident with proper collaboration and working with Chris Lahn, current city administrator, and the other council members we can make this happen.

What steps, if any, would you take to support or oppose data centers?

From what I currently know, I am not in favor of a Data Center being located in Northern Township. A data center would use our water and electric resources without proper reimbursement. A data center would possibly disturb our pristine natural resources this close to the Mississippi River.

Many Northern Minnesota cities are experiencing tightening budgets. Where would you propose making cuts, if needed?

As a new member of this council I would want to see the audits from the last three fiscal years to determine spending patterns and look for waste. We as a council would need to prioritize our needs from our wants and look for cost savings from those detailed audits.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? Bemidji Area Schools - Bemidji Middle School Principal

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. My educational background includes a Master's in Educational Administration from BSU. I hold Superintendent and K-12 Principal licenses attained from SCSU. I am actively involved in our community and was a member of the Evergreen Board of Directors for 13 years. I currently serve as the vice chair of Bemidji's United Way and also was appointed by the governor to the Board of School Administrators and serve as the chair of the ethics committee.

Why are you running? I want to see the city of Northern succeed in its endeavor to become a brand new city. I have lived in Northern Township for 23 years and



Age: did not answer

Deena Monk-Kobow

Why should voters elect you?

I have the experience to sit on the City Council and make hard decisions that will benefit everyone in the City of Northern.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

The late Dolly Parton wasn't just iconic because of her larger-than-life look and her talents in showbusiness, also because of all the words and wisdom she shared in her songs and interviews. As a avid reader I was impressed with Dolly Parton at the Imagination Library that she build for the children in her home county. Dolly had a lot to say about life, having risen from poverty to becoming a world-famous singer-songwriter and actor, successful businesswoman and beloved philanthropist.

What are the three biggest issues your city is facing?

As the City of Northern gets started we will have to take the issues one at time to make the best decisions for our community. As we learn what the issues are we will come together as a council to build the best city possible.

Which of those three issues is most important to you, and how would you address it if elected?

We will hold public meetings; have discussion ; and research issues and whatever it takes to tack the situation for a better City of Northern.

What steps, if any, would you take to support or oppose data centers?

Data Centers are a big topic of conversation among Northern MN towns. As our city gets going and if we are approached we will have to carefully consider what decision we will make. We will need to take into consideration the growth of our community, the fairness of the data center paying their fair share so they don't impact rates.

Many Northern Minnesota cities are experiencing tightening budgets. Where would you propose making cuts, if needed?

As our City gets established will take into consideration a very conversative budget.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? I am self employed as a Furniture Sales Rep

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office.

When I lived in Becker, MN I served on the City Council for 8 years. During that i helped guide major community projects, including the development of an 18-hole golf course, a community center, a new waste water treatment plant and an industrial park.

Why are you running?

To give the residents of the City of Northern a voice and that they feel heard, valued and proud to call their city home.

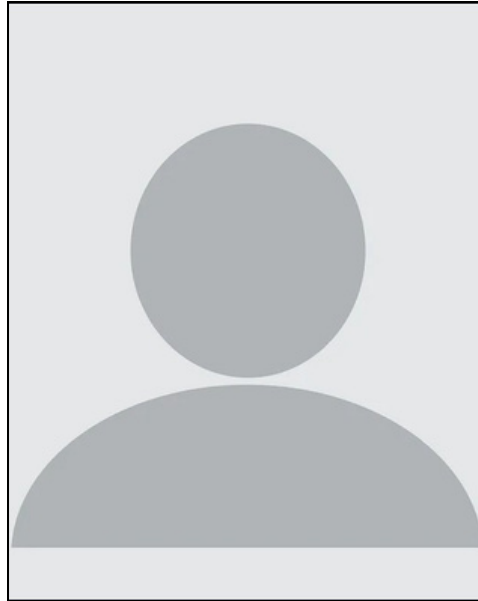
Kenneth Glidden (continued)

Many Northern Minnesota cities are experiencing tightening budgets. Where would you propose making cuts, if needed? All areas of the budget need to first come under careful review and consideration. The purpose of government and the priorities and wishes of the people within the boundaries of government will direct the spending, and any cuts that fall outside those boundaries.

9TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT SEAT 2



Matthew Mallie
Incumbent



Henry C. Ambelang*

*Candidate did not respond to KAXE's survey.

9TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT SEAT 2



Age: 56

Community:

Brainerd/Baxter of Crow
Wing County

Matthew R. Mallie

Brainerd Lakes area for approximately 20 years. During this time, I served as a city prosecutor for Brainerd, Baxter, Nisswa, Pequot Lakes and Jenkins and as a contract attorney for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. I also practiced in the areas of family law, estate planning, civil litigation, while also serving as a civil city attorney.

Why are you running? To continue to serve the people of the 9th Judicial District and the State of Minnesota.

Why should voters elect you? I believe I am best qualified to serve based on my prior experience as an attorney, prosecutor, and past several years of service as a District Court Judge. I was selected to the bench after an extensive vetting process in which the commission for judicial selections recommended me. This selection was based on my application, letters of reference,

a thorough interview process and background check.

Name a public leader you admire and explain why.

Judge David Ten Eyck. He was always well prepared and thoughtful with his decisions.

What are the biggest challenges you would face in this role, and how would you overcome them?

An ever increasing case load, addressed by working evenings and weekends as needed.

How do you plan to improve transparency and trust in the judicial system?

Working with Court Administration to assist and increase access for and with the public.

Where are you currently employed, and what is your role? District Court Judge

Please share any prior experience and education that you believe qualifies you for office. Prior to my appointment on the bench, in June of 2019, I was a practicing attorney in the

Know your voter's rights. You have the right to:

- Take time off work to vote, without losing your pay, personal leave or vacation time.
- Vote if you are in line to vote anytime before 8 p.m.
- Register to vote on Election Day if you can show the required proof of residence.
- Bring your children with you to vote.
- Ask anyone for help, except for an agent of your employer or union. A voter who requires assistance in marking a ballot, by reason of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write, may be given assistance to do so by a person of the voter's choice, other than the employer or agent of that employer or officer or agent of the voter's union.
- Vote if you are not currently incarcerated for a felony conviction, even if you are on probation or parole, or have other conditions like restitution.
- File a written complaint at your polling place if you are unhappy with the way an election is being run.