

# Hills City Council candidates

## Grant, Massey, Oliverio, Webster share their thoughts

### Jon Grant

Jon Grant says 12 years experience on the Hills city council gives him valuable insight into how things get done.



Jon Grant

In the 14 Mile-Northwestern project," he said. "I think they are likely the last two major projects in the community for a while."

Beyond his city council background, Grant touts experience on the city planning commission, chamber of commerce, the Founders Festival and service on the Grand River Corridor Committee and the Eight Mile Boulevard Association. Grant said he's able to build consensus on council "because I'm respected by them and I respect them."

Of the 11 Pines golf course expansion project, Grant said, "I don't really understand how anybody could question what the city's doing."

Grant said the city had to buy the land to stop it from becoming an industrial park. He said it was "a smart move for council to borrow from ourselves (water fund) to pay for the land, rather than pay interest or raise taxes. I felt that wasn't an option."

A golf course expansion "has been on the agenda for as long as I've been on council," Grant said. "Two parks and recreation millage renewals that were passed both had that in as a component. I can't walk away from that because that was a commitment we made to voters. I will continue to support it."

Of the 14 Mile-Northwestern "Triangle" project, Grant said, "I would have liked to have seen the (tentative) joint agreement, with three developers, for improving the entire project

area. He said the first phase of the project proposed by the lone remaining developer, featuring brick facade shops, "is on the right track."

Grant said he's not opposed to a dog park. "Liability concerns have to be addressed for me," he said, adding backers should organize a plan, as either activity or sports groups have.

While some challengers maintain council does not listen to the public, Grant countered, "There are many, many, many times council has changed its direction as a result of citizens coming forward." He said such criticisms of council "are based on that we didn't do what they wanted us to do."

Grant said, while the city is well run with lean staffing, council will have to be vigilant about budgets to maintain current city services. "Raising taxes would be a last resort to my mind," he said.

### Ken Massey

Ken Massey is one community-involved guy.

A resident since 1963, Massey's Eagle Scout project involved organizing 10 people to drive around assisting motorists, distributing a gallon of gas when needed, or changing a tire.

"We managed to call in one house fire," he recalled.

He also served nine years as a Hills paramedic, is a current homeowner's association president and has served on the board of directors of the Council of Homeowners' Associations.

And then there was the time he was riding in his truck with his stepson, and saw a man collapse in his driveway, in cardiac arrest. The two did CPR until paramedics arrived, the man was saved, and Massey got a

citiation from the city.

"I think it indicates my desire to get involved. I'm willing to do that," said the doctor and Pfizer clinical scientist. "I think I have some new ideas and some fresh approaches and I'd like the opportunity to apply them."

Massey maintains that the current council is unresponsive to citizen concerns. While a golf course expansion at the 11 Pines project is No. 1 on council's list there, he said it wasn't No. 1 with residents, adding they favored biking and hiking trails.

At 11 Pines, which contains a former landfill, "There was not disclosure of the results of the first environmental study," Massey said. "It seems they try to hide things." He said the state-approved plan to cap the landfill is appropriate.

Massey charges council also paid too much for the property, \$4.5 million. He said the state equalized value suggested a sales price of \$1.4 million.

The candidate said he's gone door-to-door in the neighborhood and residents say they don't want the 72-80 condominium units proposed for 11 Pines. He doesn't either. "I'm saying no to condos."

On the issue of a city dog park, Massey is in favor of the city finding spaces for it somewhere. He said of supporters, "All they want is a fence."

He said residents, particularly in the north central part of the city, have concerns about the overburdened sewer system. He said council should be very active in seeking state and federal help for sewer improvements.

Massey said residents south of 12 Mile believe they are not treated as well as citizens on the north end of the city. He points to the unequal quality of "Welcome to Farmington Hills" signs in the north and south.

He calls for preserving "as much open space as we can." To build consensus for issues he supports, Massey said he would seek information from citizens. He offers a Web site, [www.kenmassey.com](http://www.kenmassey.com), where people can e-mail questions and get information on his positions on issues.

Cheryl Oliverio

Incumbent Cheryl Oliverio rejects the charge that city council is not open as it could be with the public.

"We have open meetings," she said, adding that the land sale to make the 11 Pines golf course expansion project possible — which is a winning criticism from some council challengers — was also discussed in public meetings.

"People didn't go (to those meetings)," she recalled the two-term Farmington Hills city councilwoman. "We jumped in and bought it to save it from developers."

Further, Oliverio said that before she decides how to vote at meetings, she listens to the public and to fellow officials.

"I have no agendas. I consider myself an independent. I want what's best for the city of Farmington Hills," said the mother of four who works in warranty administration at Bob Sellers Pontiac-GMC.

While council has drawn some criticism in recent weeks for pursuing the golf course expansion, Oliverio said, "The golf course is definitely going to go."

"In the last two parks and recreation surveys it was one of the high priorities people wanted. We do have a commitment to residents who voted for expanding the golf course," she said.

The city has begun working with a developer in the 14 Mile Orchard Lake "Triangle" project area, and Oliverio said the city should pursue the plan to develop brick facade stores, restaurants and a hotel along Northwestern Highway, and Home Depot-type "big boxes" behind. "The people on Highview, we

can't leave them stranded," she added.

She said the city should step up efforts to seek a streetscape improvement project along Eight Mile Road. "We need to clean up Eight Mile," Oliverio said.

She proposed meetings with business owners to encourage them to add green areas, landscaping, and to discuss potential "brownfield" remediation, a designation that could result in financial assistance to clean up contaminated properties.

To address sewer problems in the city, "We don't have the money. We've got to look into federal funding," Oliverio said. "The sewer system isn't ours, we don't maintain it," she said, adding issues of who's responsible for backing into residents' homes need to be addressed.

Oliverio said she favors a dog park if backers present a plan with no cost to the city. "We don't have the money to buy a piece of property and fence it,"

Robert Monroe Webster

Robert Monroe Webster said that even if he loses his race for Farmington Hills city council, he'll still be involved in city government.

Webster, an information technology specialist and former Army counterintelligence officer, said he'll seek an appointment to a city board or commission if he doesn't win.

"I will not be one of those people that falls off the face when I lose, and I will not be one of those people that gets bogged down in bureaucracy with my vision because honestly I'm not coming into this with great grandiose ideas on how to change the city," Webster said.

"I'm going in there to do the job of administering and devel-

oping the policy that helps guide the city to take care of people's problems, to help protect them and make sure the public services work."

"My long-term goal is I'd like to be mayor. It's been my life to take organizations and guide them somewhere. It's what comes natural," he said.

When the issue of the 11 Pines-golf course expansion is raised — and that some identify it as a campaign issue — Webster responds, "Making a decision is the most important thing. I'm kind of surprised there is still an issue. They laid out the plan, they pursued the plan, they're (council) pushing forward."

"Citizens were involved and actually helped generate the ideas for what today is 11 Pines. You have a problem, fix the problem. You have to make a decision."

Webster talks about a greater partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, to redevelop particular business areas. "There's nothing that says the chamber can't be the project manager, planning to closure," he said, adding the administration can offer guidance on ordinances.

On dog parks, Webster said, "I'm not afraid of taking anything up the hill and charge. Define the scope, develop strategies and pick one."

"I am embarrassed by hate crime activity when it came to targeting Muslim, Arab or not, or religions whether you agree or not. I actually classify people who commit hate crimes as terrorists based on my background. It's the same thing. One thing I will make clear is I won't tolerate it."

Webster said that in going door to door, he was amazed by residents' lack of knowledge of their city government. He said some neighbors who've lived next door for 30 years didn't know each other.

"It's not a community, not yet," Webster said, adding he'd seek feedback on ideas from homeowners groups.

—stories by Kevin Brown; photos by Bill Brierley

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