

Alnwick-Haldimand Township

2026 Municipal Election

Community Candidate Questionnaire

Prepared by AHRPA

Purpose

This questionnaire has been developed to provide residents of Alnwick-Haldimand Township with an opportunity to better understand the views, priorities and leadership approach of each municipal candidate.

Every candidate has been asked the same questions and will have the same opportunity to respond. Responses will be published as submitted (subject only to formatting and the 2,000-character limit per question) to help residents make informed decisions at the ballot box.

Candidate Information

Name	Terry Carruthers
Office Sought	Councillor
Email	fentonterry715@gmail.com
Website / Facebook (optional)	

Section 1 – About You

1. Why are you running for municipal office?

What motivated you to seek election, and what do you hope to accomplish if elected?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

I was motivated to seek election because I have called this township home for more than a decade and have developed meaningful, lasting relationships throughout the community. I care deeply about our residents, our neighborhoods, and the future of the place we share. I believe public service is an opportunity to listen, lead with integrity, and help ensure that every voice in our township is heard.

If elected, I hope to serve as an accessible, thoughtful, and accountable representative for our community. My goal is to work collaboratively to protect the qualities that make our township special, address residents' concerns responsibly, and support practical decisions that strengthen our community for current and future generations.

2. What experience has prepared you for this role?

Describe the skills, education, professional experience, volunteer work or community involvement that you believe will help you serve residents effectively.

Maximum 2,000 characters.

As a longtime township resident and local restaurant owner, I bring practical experience in leadership, budgeting, customer service, problem-solving, and day-to-day operations. Owning and operating a business has taught me the importance of careful decision-making, responsible use of resources, clear communication, and treating every person with respect.

For more than a decade, I have built strong relationships with residents, customers, families, and other local businesses. Those connections have given me a firsthand understanding of the concerns, strengths, and opportunities within our community. I value listening to people, being approachable, and working collaboratively to find practical solutions.

My professional experience and community relationships would help me serve residents effectively by bringing a responsive, common-sense perspective to township decisions. I am committed to representing all residents fairly, staying informed, and helping preserve the strong sense of community that makes our township a place people are proud to call home.

3. What are your top three priorities?

Please identify the three most important issues you would focus on during your first term and explain why.

Maximum 2,000 characters.

1. Learning the role and serving responsibly.

As a new councillor and someone new to politics, one of my first priorities would be to fully educate myself on the responsibilities of the position, township policies, budget process, applicable laws, and current issues facing our community. I would attend available training, study the information carefully, ask thoughtful questions, and listen to experienced staff, fellow councillors, and residents. I believe residents deserve a councillor who is prepared, informed, and willing to put in the work necessary to make responsible decisions.

2. Responsible budgeting and reliable township services.

Residents deserve confidence that their tax dollars are managed carefully and that essential services are dependable. I would support transparent, practical budgeting that protects important services, public safety, and infrastructure while recognizing the financial pressures facing families and local businesses.

3. Open communication and thoughtful community planning.

I would work to ensure residents feel heard and informed about decisions that affect them. I also believe growth and development should be considered carefully, with community input, support for local businesses, and preservation of the qualities that make our township a special place to live.

Section 2 – Transparency, Governance & Public Trust

4. Restoring Public Confidence / Engagement

Many residents have expressed a desire for greater openness, accountability and public engagement. What specific actions would you take to improve transparency and rebuild public trust in Township government?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

Transparency and public engagement are important responsibilities of local government, and I believe they should be maintained consistently—not only when there is disagreement or concern. I do not begin with the assumption that Township government lacks integrity, but I do believe public trust is strengthened when residents can easily understand decisions and have meaningful opportunities to be heard.

If elected, I would support clear agendas and supporting materials being available as early as possible, plain-language explanations of major decisions, and timely posting of meeting minutes and financial information. I would encourage residents to attend meetings, use public-comment opportunities, and contact Council directly. I would also make myself accessible, respectful, and responsive when residents raise questions or concerns.

As a new councillor, I would commit to learning Township procedures thoroughly, asking informed questions, and explaining my own votes and reasoning whenever practical. My goal would be to listen carefully, communicate honestly, and help ensure residents remain informed and included in decisions that affect our community.

5. Council Meeting Accessibility

Would you support returning regular Council meetings to evening hours to improve accessibility for working residents, families and business owners? Why or why not?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

Yes, I would support returning regular Council meetings to evening hours because it can make it easier for working residents, families, and business owners to attend, follow discussions, and participate in local government. Council decisions affect the entire community, and meeting times should provide as many residents as possible with a reasonable opportunity to be involved.

At the same time, it is important to be transparent about the financial impact. Evening meetings may create additional costs when municipal staff are required to attend outside their regular working hours and are entitled to overtime or other compensation under their employment agreements. Those costs should be clearly identified and weighed against the value of improved public accessibility and participation.

I would support reviewing the costs and practical requirements carefully, while looking for a schedule that improves access without placing an unnecessary burden on taxpayers. In my view, meaningful public participation is important, but decisions about meeting times should be made openly, responsibly, and with a clear understanding of both the benefits and the cost.

6. Closed (In-Camera) Meetings

Ontario law permits Council to meet in closed session only under specific circumstances. What principles would guide your decision to move a matter into an in-camera meeting, and how would you ensure those meetings are used only when necessary?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

I would approach closed meetings as a lawful but limited tool for protecting sensitive matters. I believe every councillor has a responsibility to understand and apply the rules carefully. My guiding principle would be that Council business should remain open to the public unless there is a clear, permitted reason under Ontario's Municipal Act to meet in closed session. Examples may include matters involving personal privacy, legal advice or litigation, labour relations, security, or certain property and financial matters. Before supporting a closed session, I would want to be satisfied that the item genuinely fits a permitted exception and that the meeting is no broader or longer than necessary. I would rely on the advice of the Clerk and, when appropriate, legal counsel to ensure the proper process is followed. That includes identifying the general nature of the item in the public motion to go in camera, keeping appropriate records, and returning to open session for any report or decision that can properly be made public. My goal would be to protect confidential information when the law requires it while ensuring residents have as much access as possible to the decisions and discussions that affect our township.

7. Council Culture

Healthy councils rely on respectful discussion and differing viewpoints. How would you contribute to a culture of collaboration, respectful debate and professional conduct around the Council table?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

I would contribute by treating every member of Council, Township staff, and resident with respect, even when there are differing opinions. Healthy discussion does not require everyone to agree; it requires people to listen carefully, ask questions in good faith, and focus on the issue rather than making disagreements personal. As a new councillor, I would come prepared, do my homework, and keep an open mind. I would listen to the perspectives of fellow councillors, staff, and residents before making decisions, and I would be willing to respectfully reconsider my position when new information is presented. I believe constructive debate leads to stronger decisions when it is based on facts, Township policy, and the best interests of the community. I would also support a professional Council culture in which people communicate clearly, follow proper procedures, and remember that residents expect us to work together. My goal would be to be thoughtful, approachable, and solution-focused, while representing my views honestly and respectfully.

Section 3 – Financial Responsibility

8. Financial Stewardship/Efficiency

Property taxes continue to rise while municipalities face growing infrastructure demands. How would you balance maintaining essential services, investing in infrastructure and keeping property taxes affordable?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

Balancing essential services, infrastructure needs, and property-tax affordability requires careful planning and responsible budgeting. I recognize that residents, seniors, families, and local businesses are all feeling financial pressure, while the Township must also maintain roads, facilities, equipment, and the services people rely on every day.

I would support a transparent budget process that clearly distinguishes between operating costs, long-term infrastructure needs, and discretionary spending. Essential services and public safety must remain a priority, while major capital projects should be guided by sound asset-management planning, realistic timelines, and the condition and urgency of the infrastructure involved.

I would also look for opportunities to make the best use of grants, reserves, partnerships, and efficiencies before placing additional pressure on taxpayers. At the same time, I would avoid making cuts simply to reduce a budget in the short term if those cuts would create larger costs or poorer service in the future.

As a new councillor, I would take the time to understand the Township's financial position, infrastructure plans, and budget process thoroughly. My goal would be to make informed, practical decisions that protect essential services, maintain community assets responsibly, and keep tax increases as reasonable and predictable as possible.

9. Independent Financial Accountability

Public confidence in municipal finances is essential to good governance. If elected, would you support commissioning an independent external financial review—or, where justified, a forensic audit—of the Township's finances to provide residents with an objective assessment of the municipality's financial position and financial practices? Why or why not?

Would you commit to implementing appropriate recommendations arising from the review, whether they identify strengths, weaknesses or opportunities for improvement?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

If elected, I would take the time to review the Township's audited financial statements, audit findings, budget documents, reserve policies, and long-term infrastructure plans. I would support considering recommendations from independent auditors or any properly authorized review objectively and on their merits. Where recommendations identify practical opportunities to strengthen processes, improve communication, or protect public funds, I would support responsible action while recognizing and preserving the financial practices that are already working well.

10. Infrastructure Priorities

Roads, bridges, water treatment facilities, libraries, recreation facilities, municipal buildings and local halls (i.e. – Fenella) and other infrastructure all compete for limited funding. How would you prioritize infrastructure investments over the next four years?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

I would prioritize infrastructure using a long-term, evidence-based plan rather than short-term pressures. As a new councillor, I would review the Township's asset-management plan, condition assessments, reserve funds, current commitments, and available grant opportunities before making decisions.

Public safety, legal and environmental requirements, and essential services would come first. This includes roads, bridges, water or wastewater systems, and municipal facilities where delays could create safety risks, service disruptions, or significantly higher future costs.

For other projects, I would consider the condition of the asset, how widely it is used, repair versus replacement costs, long-term operating expenses, and the benefit to the community. Libraries, recreation facilities, halls, and other public spaces are important and should be evaluated fairly within the overall plan.

I would support clear communication about priorities, costs, and timelines. My goal would be to maintain Township assets responsibly, make effective use of grants and reserves, and remain mindful of the impact on taxpayers.

Section 4 – Growth & Economic Development

11. Responsible Growth

What does responsible growth look like for Alnwick-Haldimand Township over the next decade?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

Responsible growth means recognizing that growth is both necessary and inevitable, while ensuring it happens at a moderate, well-planned pace that respects the rural character of Alnwick-Haldimand Township. In speaking with residents—both longtime community members and newcomers—I consistently hear that people chose to live here because it is not a city. They value the space, natural surroundings, small-community feel, and quality of life our Township offers.

Over the next decade, I would support growth that is guided by sound planning, appropriate infrastructure capacity, and meaningful community input. New development should be considered carefully in relation to roads, water and wastewater services, emergency services, schools, and the long-term financial impact on taxpayers.

I believe we should welcome families, businesses, and investment that fit our community, while avoiding growth that overwhelms local services or changes the character residents value. Responsible growth should also respect agricultural land, natural areas, and existing neighbourhoods wherever possible.

The goal should not be to stop progress, but to manage it thoughtfully—preserving what makes Alnwick-Haldimand special while ensuring the Township remains sustainable, welcoming, and affordable for future generations.

12. Supporting Business & Agriculture

How would you support local businesses, agriculture, tourism and economic development while preserving the Township's rural character?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

I would support economic development by focusing on opportunities that strengthen the businesses, farms, and attractions already rooted in Alnwick/Haldimand Township. As a local business owner, I understand the importance of a supportive environment where businesses can operate, grow, and continue contributing to the life of the community.

I believe the Township can help by maintaining clear and fair processes, communicating well with local businesses, supporting appropriate local events and tourism initiatives, and promoting the many assets that bring people here—our farms, natural spaces, small businesses, history, and community spirit.

Agriculture is an essential part of our local economy and rural identity. I would support policies and planning decisions that respect agricultural land, recognize the needs of farm businesses, and help ensure agriculture remains viable for future generations...including restricting development on agricultural classes 1 to 4 land. We can achieve this by following the Northumberland County Official Agricultural Plan.

Tourism and new business investment should be welcomed when they are compatible with the Township's scale, infrastructure, and rural character. The goal should be steady, practical growth that creates opportunity without turning our community into something residents did not choose to live in.

13. Housing

What role should the Township play in encouraging appropriate housing opportunities for seniors, young families and first-time homebuyers?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

The Township has an important role in encouraging housing options that meet the needs of residents at different stages of life, while ensuring that growth remains appropriate for our rural community. Seniors should have opportunities to remain close to family, friends, and the services they rely on, while young families and first-time homebuyers should be able to see a future here as well.

I believe the Township can support this through thoughtful land-use planning, clear and fair development processes, and decisions that consider infrastructure capacity, road safety, available services, and the long-term impact on taxpayers. The Township should also work constructively with the County, local service providers, developers, and community organizations where appropriate, recognizing that housing affordability is a complex issue that no municipality can solve alone.

I would support a range of housing choices that fit the scale and character of Alnwick-Haldimand, including options that allow seniors to downsize locally and families to establish themselves in the community. The goal should be moderate, well-planned housing growth that responds to real local needs without placing unreasonable pressure on Township services or changing the rural character residents value.

Section 5 – Community Services & Quality of Life

14. Recreation & Community Facilities

What improvements would you like to see in Township parks, recreation facilities, trails, libraries and community spaces?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

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15. Volunteers & Community Organizations

Volunteers contribute significantly to our community. How can Council better support local volunteers, service clubs and community organizations?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

Volunteers, service clubs, and community organizations are an important part of life in Alnwick-Haldimand Township. They contribute time, energy, and expertise to events, recreation, fundraising, local services, and the overall sense of connection that makes our community special.

I believe it is important for Council to listen to volunteers and community organizations, while respecting the independence, governance structures, and responsibilities of each group. Not every concern will have a simple solution, but open communication and mutual respect can help identify practical ways to work together.

If elected, I would support a collaborative approach that recognizes the value volunteers bring to our Township and helps create an environment in which community organizations can continue to serve residents successfully.

16. Healthcare Recruitment

Access to family physicians and other healthcare professionals remains a challenge across Ontario. What role, if any, should the Township play in attracting healthcare professionals and supporting local healthcare initiatives?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

Access to family physicians and other healthcare professionals is a serious concern for communities across Ontario. While the delivery and funding of healthcare are primarily provincial responsibilities, I believe the Township can play an appropriate supporting role. The Township can work collaboratively with the County, local healthcare providers, neighbouring municipalities, and community organizations to identify local needs and support practical recruitment or retention efforts where appropriate. This could include helping promote the strengths of our community, sharing information about available opportunities, and ensuring that local planning and infrastructure decisions support a healthy, livable community. Any Township involvement should be realistic, transparent, and mindful of the cost to taxpayers. I would be open to considering initiatives that have a clear purpose, are supported by reliable information, and complement—rather than duplicate—the responsibilities of the Province and healthcare system. My focus would be on being a constructive municipal partner and advocating for the services our residents need, while recognizing the limits of the Township's authority and resources.

Section 6 – Communication & Leadership

17. Communication

If elected, how will residents hear from you between elections? Please describe how you intend to communicate regularly with the community.

Maximum 2,000 characters.

If elected, I would remain accessible and communicate with residents throughout the term—not only during an election. I believe effective representation begins with listening and being available when people have questions, concerns, or ideas. I would make an effort to connect with residents in person, including through door-to-door conversations and attendance at community events whenever possible. I would also be available by email and phone, so residents have practical ways to contact me directly. I would encourage residents to share their perspectives and would make every effort to respond respectfully and in a timely manner. When appropriate, I would also share updates about Council matters and decisions that may affect the community, while respecting the confidentiality rules that apply to municipal government. My goal would be to be approachable, responsive, and present in the community throughout my term.

18. Listening to Residents

Describe a time when listening to another perspective changed your opinion or improved a decision.

Maximum 2,000 characters.

One example comes from my experience as a restaurant owner. We were considering a change to our weekend menu that I initially believed would be the best approach. Before moving forward, I took the time to speak with the staff, customers, and others who would be affected. Their feedback raised practical concerns and perspectives that I had not fully considered. After listening, I adjusted the plan to stay with our original menu options. The final decision was stronger because it better balanced the needs of the business with the people it served. That experience reinforced for me that listening is more than simply hearing different opinions. It is being willing to consider information you may not have had, reassess your first impression, and make a better decision as a result. As a councillor, I would bring that same approach to Council: come prepared, listen respectfully, ask questions, and remain open to changing my view when the facts or community input support doing so.

19. Difficult Decisions

Tell residents about one difficult decision you expect Council will face during the next four years and how you would approach it.

Maximum 2,000 characters.

One of the most difficult decisions Council is likely to face will be balancing the cost of maintaining and improving essential infrastructure with the need to keep property taxes as affordable and predictable as possible. Roads, bridges, facilities, and other Township assets require long-term investment, but residents and local businesses are also facing real financial pressures. I would approach those decisions by reviewing the Township's asset-management plan, condition assessments, reserve funds, current budget, and available grant opportunities. I would want to understand the urgency of each project, the consequences of delaying it, and whether repair, replacement, or a phased approach represents the best value for taxpayers. I would listen to staff, fellow councillors, and residents, while keeping public safety and essential services as the first priorities. As a new councillor, I would also take the time to learn the financial details before making decisions. My goal would be to make practical, well-informed choices that protect the Township's long-term needs without placing unnecessary pressure on residents today.

20. Working with Others

How would you work with fellow councillors whose opinions differ significantly from your own?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

I believe it is important to focus on the issue rather than the individual, follow proper procedures, and look for common ground wherever possible. Even when Council members ultimately vote differently, residents should see people who can communicate professionally, work constructively, and move forward respectfully after a decision is made.

21. Measuring Success

At the end of your term, what accomplishments would you hope residents use to judge your performance?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

At the end of my term, I would hope residents judge me less by promises and more by how I served them day to day. I want to be known as a down-to-earth, honest, and approachable councillor who listened carefully, treated people with respect, and kept my word.

I would hope residents feel that I was accessible when they had a question or concern, that I came prepared and worked hard to understand the issues before Council, and that I made decisions based on the best interests of the Township rather than personal agendas.

I would also hope to be judged by whether I communicated openly, followed through on the commitments I made, and worked respectfully with Council, staff, volunteers, businesses, and residents—even when conversations or decisions were difficult.

Ultimately, I would consider it an accomplishment if residents felt they had a representative who was present, dependable, willing to learn, and committed to serving the whole community fairly.

22. Why Should Residents Vote for You?

In 250 words or less, tell residents why you are the best person to represent them.

Maximum 2,000 characters.

I am seeking election because this Township has been my home for more than a decade. As a local restaurant owner, I understand the importance of hard work, responsible decision-making, strong relationships, and being accountable to the people you serve.

I would bring a practical, down-to-earth perspective to Council. I am not a career politician, and I will not pretend to have every answer on day one. I will do the work to learn the role, study the issues, listen carefully to staff and residents, and make informed decisions. I believe that is how a councillor earns trust.

I care deeply about this community and the people who live, work, volunteer, and operate businesses here. I value the rural character of our Township and want to support thoughtful growth, sound financial decisions, reliable services, and respectful communication.

Residents deserve a representative who is accessible, honest, and willing to listen—even when viewpoints differ. I would be available through door-to-door conversations, email, phone calls, and community events. I would keep my word, explain my decisions respectfully, and represent the interests of the entire Township.

I am asking for the opportunity to serve with integrity, common sense, and a genuine commitment to our community.

Optional Closing Statement

Is there anything else you would like residents to know that was not covered in this questionnaire?

Maximum 2,000 characters.

Submission Guidelines

- Responses exceeding the 2,000-character limit per question may be truncated. All candidates who submit responses by the deadline will be posted on the AHRPA website.
- Responses will be published without endorsement or editorial comment.