

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	Jim McCormack
Office Sought	Councillor
Email	jmccormack2026@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.

When I became a member of the Parks and Rec Advisory Committee at the beginning of the current term of Council, it became apparent that improvements were required in governance, public engagement and communications. As I followed Council closely this became more apparent. With my municipal and volunteer experience in the past, I believe I can contribute in these areas to initiate significant changes in how the Township conducts business. My hope if I am elected is that changes can be made that enhance processes, involve the community in meaningful dialogue and ensure that ratepayers are satisfied with the services provided and that those services are affordable..

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.

I graduated from Seneca College's Recreation Facilities Management program with High Honours in 1988. I immediately began my career in municipal recreation with the City of Brampton starting out as a Facilities Operator and moving up to a Facilities Manager 1. In November of 1997 I started employment with the Municipality of Port Hope first as the Facilities Manager, then as Director of Parks, Recreation and Culture from 2015 to my retirement in 2021. With these positions it allowed me to gain the skills in understanding overall municipal governance, budgeting, customer service, managing large groups of employees and working with the community at large in a host of areas including Advisory Committees, parks and facility development and policy development. As a volunteer I was a member of the Port Hope Kinsmen for over 15 years and held positions of both President and Canada Day Chair, coached girls rep hockey and volunteered at a number of community events. In recent years I was a member of the executive of the Northumberland Bulldogs Special Needs hockey program and a member of the Township's Parks and Rec Advisory Committee for 2 years.

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.

My top three priorities; Increased Resident Engagement; Improve Municipal Processes; Enhanced Communication Strategies. In speaking with residents and attending public meetings it is clear that residents feel they are not being listened to or feel they have no means to meaningfully engage with Council. My thoughts on improving in these areas include; holding Council and Committee of the Whole (COW) meetings in the evenings, adding a Question Period to all Council/COW meetings, hosting Town Hall style meetings at least twice per year, seeking feedback on various roles of Committees of Council and expanding on the ability for the public to provide comments on various matters prior to final approval.

Improved Municipal Processes would include; re-vamping the decision making process to have the majority of staff reports presented through COW first prior to Council approval. Too many matters are being approved "on the spot". This process would allow the public additional time to understand what is proposed to be approved and can contact Council members with questions and concerns. The Budget process requires changes to include additional information provided by staff such as actual expenditure/revenues from previous years, projected actuals for current budget, explanation/justification for all line item increases/decreases over \$2,000 and the draft budget posted and open for public comments prior to being approved. I would support a forensic audit of our finances and budget with recommendations related to proper allocation of funds. I would lobby for an operational and organizational audit/review. Review of municipal comparators used related to determining salaries and benefits.

Enhanced Communications; update of the township website to improve ease of access and making it more user friendly. This would also include links to easily access studies and By-laws among other important documents of interest. Enhance the use of social media and encourage within reason public comments. Develop a Branding Policy to clearly and consistently identify municipal vehicles, letterhead, correspondence and staff uniforms that reflect the brand of the Township with consistency. Seek public input on how to improve the sharing of information with the public and in particular those who are not current with technology and social media.

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.

From my perspective, I believe that residents are discouraged with the current state of governance with respect to confidence in the decision making process, accountability and their ability to have their voices heard. I have identified this as one of my top three priorities and explained in Question 3. If we can increase the public's ability to engage and have meaningful and constructive conversations with residents, I believe we can build back that trust. But it will take time and some hard work and I'm fully committed to seeing this process through

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.

I am in favor of moving Council/COW meetings to evenings starting at 6:30pm. This will allow easier access for families and those who work who currently can't attend. I understand this was tried with the current Council for a period of time and it was reported that attendance did not change, But that shouldn't mean evenings are not suitable. Various topics will come up that garner public interest and these topics need to be accessible. I would also support continued virtual access for meetings. I would propose that Council and COW meet on the same evening twice per month. Another Council candidate had mentioned to me that there would be benefits to rotating meetings between the north and the south and I would support this initiative as well.

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.

The Municipal Act clearly identifies when Council may/should meet In Camera. Sometimes this may be open to interpretation and Council would look to the Clerk for guidance in these matters. That's not to say that I would not ask questions if I am not sure or unclear, I believe it is staff's role to provide a detailed explanation in advance as to why a specific matter is required In Camera and that councillors should ask the necessary questions and where feasible look for second opinions on the matter. It is a fine line to walk in order to protect the Townships best interest from liability and maintain openness with the residents. The most recent decision to not release resignation letters of former committee members under the guise of confidentiality is in my view a breach of public trust. These types of actions cannot occur moving forward.

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.

My background and experience as a municipal staff person required a high level of professionalism and collaboration. As a member of a Senior Management Team we worked together to break down silos and gain a greater level of appreciation for each other's departments and responsibilities. This was due in part to the absence of a CAO for almost 4 years during my time as Director in Port Hope. Council placed high expectations of our municipal team that required open dialogue directly with Council in order to build positive relationships and work collaboratively for the good of the community. With this background and experience I am confident I can bring this to the Council table. Democracy relies on healthy debates. But in order for a Council to function at a high level, debate needs to remain respectful of others opinions and not become personal. Going into this if I were to be successful in being elected I understand fully that as a group we will not always agree. I think what is important is to express yourself and your position on any topic in a respectful and thoughtful manner and regardless of the outcome of a vote, knowing full well that you explained your position to the best of your abilities.

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.

The budget process needs improvements in how they are developed and approved along with how they are monitored and that Council is provided with this information. I support a dedicated Infrastructure levy that is placed in general reserves. I will only support tax increases that align with the average inflation rate over a one year period. I do believe there are efficiencies within the existing budget that can be re-directed into capital infrastructure however further analysis and details would be necessary to confirm. In addition the Township needs to improve in the area of researching various grant opportunities and on improvements to the application process for grants. There are resources available through various levels of government to assist with grant applications. In addition, the County and our MP and MPP's offices have staff who are able to assist. Infrastructure and operating grants must become a priority. I would support quarterly budget updates and ensure they are available to the public. The updates should include YTD expenses, revenues and projected year end amounts with rationale provided for any deviations. This document needs to be easy to understand using laymen terms in order for the general public to understand the data being provided. I would advocate for a more comprehensive budget process that includes explanations for all proposed line item increases/decreases over \$2,000 as well as previous actuals along with projected actuals for the current year. This information is critical in making sound financial decisions. Through a Budget Committee comprised of members of Council, direction can be provided to staff in advance of budget preparations to identify priorities and benchmarks for any potential increases.

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.*

Yes I support an independent review or a forensic audit. Based on some preliminary research the cost to conduct one would be in the range of between \$15,000 to \$25,000. This may seem like a high amount to some but there is value in ensuring our financial position is presented along with recommendations for improvements where necessary. It has been noted by members of the community that there is not a clear understanding of our current accounting practices. Examples include ensuring reserve monies are being placed in the proper reserve accounts. In addition there are examples of sole source purchasing which require further examination. I would support an update to the current Procurement Bylaw as it is somewhat outdated. Recommendations that are a result of any audit must be made available to the public to allow for transparency in the process. I would also support the audit reviewing how monies are currently allocated and where feasible is there an opportunity to reallocate to more immediate needs.

In addition to this audit, I would also support an operational and organizational review including that of Council's decision making processes.

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.

Infrastructure priorities are currently identified in the townships Asset Management Plan. I am not aware as to whether or not this information has been incorporated into department specific work plans and long term capital planning. If not, I would support that type of planning to be implemented. It is my understanding that the Asset Management plan requires updating which is prudent. Capital projects should align with this plan. In addition, I would support the development of a policy related to Building Condition Assessments to be completed by a qualified engineer every 5 years. This aligns with best practices related to facility management. It also allows for adjustments to the existing Asset Management Plan for unforeseen circumstances should this be the case. In addition snow load calculations for each structure must also be completed as part of this assessment. I would consider deviating from the Asset Management Plan in the event of any significant grant opportunity where the criteria for the grant may not align with the timing for projects. For example should a Bridge grant program be announced yet we have no plans to repair or replace any bridges in that timeframe, an application would still be a decision that should be followed through with..

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.

Growth is projected to be on pace for what it has been for the past number of years, which is somewhere in the neighborhood of 2% The demographics of that growth is projected to be that of an aging community. With this in mind, growth should be primarily aligned with the current identified hamlets of Grafton, Centerton and Roseneath. A review of the Townships Official Plan is required and must move forward. I am not aware of when the County's Growth Management Strategy will be updated as the potential Wesleyville Nuclear project will have implications on that existing plan. I would support Council along with our planning staff working with the County to determine what impacts this project will have on the township short and long term. The vast majority of the township falls within the Oak Ridges Moraine where development is very limited. I would not support the development of any new hamlets within the township.

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.

Being a primarily rural township, tourism and Economic Development tend to take a back seat to other priorities. That's not to say that this is right or that these areas aren't important to the fabric of our community. My question is when has any previous Council sought feedback from local businesses and our agricultural community? Is there a need for an Agricultural Advisory Committee to have a voice with Council? How closely do we work with the Northumberland Chamber of Commerce and does this organization provide the support our local businesses need? The township encompasses a large portion of Rice Lake which is a significant tourist destination. Do these businesses feel they have the necessary support? There may be opportunities to help promote recreation based tourism through the County. This could include cycling tourism, camping facilities, golf courses and fishing opportunities to name a few. These are all questions that I would bring up for discussion. Our agricultural community is significant. Do we consult with this community when looking at road improvements or maintenance? Are there established policies related to accommodating large machinery on our roads with respect to road widths, shoulder widths, tree and canopy maintenance and signage? I believe it is important to reach out to the agricultural sector to have these important discussions..

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.

Housing has become a topic of significant urgency over the past number of years. Governments struggle with ownership of the issues as one level of government passes off to another. Typically lower tier municipalities have limited responsibility with the exception of planning policies. However, locally over the past 4 years an Affordable Housing Task Force was developed with each municipality in the county providing representatives from each Council. They continue to meet to explore opportunities and partnerships in order to support affordable and mixed housing. Municipalities can play a role in revisions to bylaws to permit additional housing units on existing properties as an example. I believe the township should continue to support with regular updates being brought forward to council either in reports or through delegations. In the event of small development proposals I would like to explore the possibility and feasibility of the requirement for developers to identify a certain percentage of townhouses or semi detached housing. This could also include single level condo type housing as well. .

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.

My first priority with respect to Parks and Recreation is to have the necessary upgrades completed at the Nauwatin Sanctuary completed by the summer of 2027. This matter has taken far too long to complete. I would also, through the support and resolution of Council, direct that the Centerton Park on County Road 22 be reopened and maintained to the same standard as our other parks, In addition I would request that staff work with Northumberland Minor Soccer to investigate future use of this park. Within this term, I would support the completion of a Trails Master Plan that would identify and map both township owned and trails owned by others.

The plan could also identify recommendations for specific trail uses (ie. walking, ATV, horseback, walking, etc), trail surface treatment and maintenance and multi use opportunities and standards. There are still outstanding matters related to the use of ATV's on municipal properties that must be addressed. This past December a large group of residents attended a meeting at Fenella Hall with respect to the future use of the facility. To my knowledge there has been no follow-up. The community spoke loud and clear that they wanted to maintain the hall in our community and were willing to help to accomplish it. This even included the suggestion to revisit community boards for each community centre. I support further dialogue in this area and do not support the disposition of any of our community centres.. A new Parks Master Plan should be completed in 2028 as the last plan was completed in 2018, Typically these plans are completed once every 10 years. I support our network of libraries and understand and appreciate the need in our community. I would also support our libraries partnering with Parks and Recreation for cross programming opportunities.

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.

Council and staff need to ensure that strong relationships are developed with community groups and volunteers. Too often barriers are put in place that restrict volunteer involvement or community initiatives. Instead of saying "no we can't do that" maybe our approach should be "what can we do to support you and make this happen". Of course liability always plays a part but it shouldn't be the scape goat. Minimizing liability can be accomplished by working together. Service Clubs play a vital role in our communities. As someone who was very involved with the Kinsmen who donated manpower and significant funds to community initiatives I am very aware of their ability and want to contribute. We should be seeking out ways to work together. Volunteers should not be looked upon as a threat but rather an asset. Policies can be developed that support volunteers rather than hinder. I would support a full review of the existing Advisory/Committees by seeking input from the residents on how best can we utilize the strengths of our volunteers. Should we establish advisory committees? Should we have Working Groups with specific tasks and beginning and end tenure? Is there an opportunity to restore community centre boards and how would they function and interact with the township. I do not support the status quo and believe a fresh start is required in this area.

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.

The township should be supporting the Doctor Recruitment initiative if it isn't already. This program has resulted in attracting family physicians to our area but more is needed. In Grafton we have seen the evolution of pharmacy to a multi purpose health care service provider. This includes a nurse practitioner and a part time physician who provides walk in services. This model could be utilized in other areas of the township and I believe it is important to gain an understanding of how that evolved from the owner. I'm not suggesting the township be actively involved in establishing however and understanding is important and can be relayed to similar businesses who are considering opening in the township. Mental health and addictions continue to be a detriment to our society. We should be looking to the Health Unit to understand what support mechanisms are in place for our township, where are the gaps and what is the plan to address .

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.

I plan to make myself available to the residents. By this I mean attending community events, being willing to meet with individuals or groups or just by having a conversation over a cup of coffee. Politicians need to be more accessible. Perhaps Council can organize or host social gatherings such as a New Years Levee or continuing with the sponsored skating event. I would support a Council newsletter that provides updates on Council activities along with County updates. This would be above and beyond the current newsletter that goes out with property tax notices. I would also be open to QandA sessions that could be in person or online. I've always believed when serving the public you need to be visible and available. Of course I need my own time but I will ensure that I make time for the residents

18. Listening to Residents

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

Maximum 2,000 characters.

We were in the initial planning stages of designing and choosing a location for a new splash pad in Port Hope. My staff and I had narrowed the choices down to 2 or 3 prime locations. We were close to bringing the report forward to Council when my two managers asked to meet with me about the project. They had explored another location and suggested Wladyka Park between the playground and the ball diamond. I immediately disagreed as I didn't think it would fit, location was wrong, liability, etc. But to their credit they came prepared with a pitch knowing I would have many questions. After 15 or 20 minutes of them explaining to me why it was the best location over what we had previously identified, I indicated I needed to think about it as I was still skeptical. I later drove to the park and walked the area and the longer I walked it and the longer I thought about the information they had provided, my pre conceived opinion began to change to the point where I agreed with my staff that it was the best location. I gave myself an additional day or two to weigh the pros and cons and met with them to advise them I agreed with their assessment and thanked them for the work they put in. When we presented it to Council, the user groups and the public, the majority supported the location. To this day I still believe that location is the ideal location for the splash pad

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.

It's a difficult question to answer as I believe it depends on who gets elected and what their priorities are. From my perspective it's not necessarily one decision but rather a number of decisions with the goal of achieving one outcome. That outcome is how do we as a community move forward in a responsible and proactive approach where we can regain the faith and trust in our elected officials. In talking to residents they are upset in many cases and I believe with good reason. I have outlined throughout this document and in my platform the ideas I have to solve this problem and regain that trust. My response may not achieve the outcome you were expecting or directly answer the question but I do believe this is the number one area that needs to be restored. Good governance, responsible decision making and community engagement.

20. Working with Others

How would you work with fellow councillors whose opinions differ significantly from your own? *Maximum 2,000 characters.*

The key to success is to listen to their perspective, share yours, and look for common ground to build upon. We all need to ensure that we respect each other's perspectives and style and check our egos at the door. Being a member of Council isn't about one single individual but working as a collective for the overall benefit of the community. In my career I worked with many staff, volunteers and community members who had varying opinions from mine. But having a respectful conversation and listening to what others believe is important. In the end decisions will be made that I may not agree with. But I will respect the decision of Council as a whole

21. Measuring Success

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

Maximum 2,000 characters.

I would hope that I would be judged on my integrity, the effort I put into the position, my ability to effectively communicate and that positive changes have been brought forward that the community expects and supports. I'm only potentially one voice on Council. If we can regain the trust of our community and embrace the willingness to listen and enact, then I believe we have done our job. It has become clear to me that residents are not satisfied or at least unsure if their tax dollars are being spent effectively and to their advantage. As I have stated earlier this is an area that is of great importance to me and if we can achieve success in creating a budget that residents understand and support that will be an accomplishment. Improvements through governance and resident engagement and how I work with Council to achieve these priorities is how I believe my performance will be judged.

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 believe I have the related municipal experience and leadership skills to represent you at the Council table. I have a strong understanding of overall municipal operations, budgeting, working with other levels of government, working in a team environment and have a great deal of experience in working with the community as a whole. I'm not in this for any personal gain or agendas. My previous involvement as a volunteer in a variety of capacities is a testament to my commitment to serving the community where I live. And that is the main reason I am running. I want to help. I want to share my experience to help facilitate positive change. I pay taxes like everyone else and I want to have an influence as to how my tax dollars are spent to ensure they are spent responsibly. I understand the responsibility of being a public servant. With great power comes great responsibility. Being empowered to serve the

residents of this community is a responsibility I would not take lightly.

Optional Closing Statement

AHRPA 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections | Page 7

Alnwick-Haldimand Township 2026 Municipal Election — Community Candidate Questionnaire

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

Maximum 2,000 characters.

A Couple of other background notes

- *I achieved my Registered Recreation Facilities Administrator Professional designation through the Ontario Recreation Facilities Association*
- *Completed my training to become a certified Joint Health and Safety Committee member and was a member of the JHSC in Port Hope for 22 years.*
- *Held my Fireworks Supervisor 1 license and supervised numerous shows in Port Hope, Brampton, Mississauga and Hamilton.*
- *Completed the Leadership in a Municipal Setting program through Loyalist College*
- *Married for 36 years to my wife Teresa. We have 2 grown daughters and 4 grandchildren. My oldest daughter is a resident of the Township*

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.

