



Go Green Wilmette
Answers to the Questionnaire for Candidates Running for
Commissioner, Wilmette Park Board

April 4, 2017 Municipal Election

Note: There are four candidates running for three open positions.

YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL BACKGROUND AND PRIORITIES

1. Please briefly describe any environmental or nature-related accomplishments or projects in which you have been involved, either professionally or personally.

Bryan Abbott: I am a Civil Engineer and Project Manager with 37 years' experience in the design and construction of large scale building projects. In those years I have overseen the design and installation of an incredible array of environmentally green building components. These include: Solar water heaters, permeable pavers, LED lighting, low flow plumbing fixtures, recycling of materials in demolition and re-use of recycled materials in construction, solar awnings, passive solar heating, high efficiency heating and air conditioning, building automation systems that maximize energy saving, Freon conversions to environmentally safe refrigerants, heat exchange wheels for outside air intakes, low off-gas glues and materials, native plant landscaping projects, storm water detention & retention ponds, prairie rain gardens and bio-swales. I've seen these "green" ideas evolve from conception to application and I've witnessed their increasingly economic competitiveness against the practices that they are replacing.

In addition to my professional involvement, I have volunteered my personal time towards the following conservation projects: Dune grass planting at Gillson Park, trail building, prairie seed collections, prairie restoration, invasive species (e.g. buckthorn and garlic mustard) removal,

bird habitat plantings, and the construction of compost bins and garden planters for various local organizations.

Gordon Anderson: Professionally, I have been involved in two major environmentally focused construction projects. The first was the 2015 renovation of my company's corporate/R&D headquarters in St. Charles, IL where we converted a 1970s era one-story building in a traditional office park to a showplace of sustainable nature-centric design. The project included a 100 KW photovoltaic solar array installed on our roof for which we applied and were approved for a \$120,000 grant from the IL Dept. of Economic Opportunity. We installed eight electric vehicle charging stations, replaced all the lighting fixtures with LED and other energy saving features, opened up the interior, and then installed solar tubes and low flow water fixtures. Outside, we replaced turf and established a native Illinois prairie, planted fruit trees, created a composting area, and built raised garden beds where employees grow vegetables. We are applying for Silver LEED certification.

Currently, we are constructing a service headquarters in Roselle, IL. We have designed the building to be the first positive energy building in Illinois, producing more energy than it uses. Since we are building new, rather than renovating an old building, we are including geothermal heating/cooling, solar panels, highly efficient SIP panels, a green wall and intelligent design which best captures the solar and wind advantages of the site. The grounds will feature a native prairie and landscaping with a cistern to capture rainwater from the roof, electric vehicle charging stations, and porous pavers in the parking lot. Once complete, we will be applying for Platinum LEED certification.

As the Chief Financial Officer, I am a member of a three-person team working directly with our architect/contractor, with primary responsibility for managing the financial aspects of the project.

Chris Lewis: As a lifelong sailor, I have deep respect and concern for many environmental issues associated with the Great Lakes. Waste dumping, invasive species and erosion control are all concerns that we have to manage in our lakes and beaches. I have been involved with several programs with my sailing teams in becoming more environmentally friendly with our usage of Lake Michigan.

My family is also very environmentally friendly in our daily lives, and we encourage our children to do the same at school. I believe that starting our children on the path of being responsible environmentally, we are preparing them for a life of protecting our environment.

Amy Wolfe: I am a board member of the Ouilmette Foundation, which recently organized and executed the Bird Habitat plantings at Gillson Park. Through our organization we raised funds to match a grant that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Agency had given to the Wilmette Park District. With the matching funds, we were able to purchase plants and tree material that was installed by numerous volunteers at Gillson with the intention of increasing the feeding areas for the birds migrating across Lake Michigan. It was a wonderful project and hopefully not only increased the number of migrating birds, but added to the aesthetic beauty of the park.

I also spearheaded the project to remove plastic water cups from the cafeteria at McKenzie Elementary. I worked with the principal and District 39 to come up with a budget, a plan, and funding to purchase reusable water cups for lunch each day. This effort reduced thousands of plastic cups being thrown away each year at school.

2. If elected, are you planning to introduce any new projects or programs that would address environmental or nature-based needs? What would you do to involve members of the community?

Bryan Abbott: I support creating a nature trail along the Sanitary Canal, which would link Sheridan Road with the McCormick Blvd. trail. MWRD is bringing the Deep Tunnel processing plants online in the next few years, completing their clean-up of the canal and the Chicago River. The WPD is a leaseholder of this land and I believe we should be poised take advantage of the new opportunities that this massive public undertaking has created.

I support adding bio-swales, rain gardens and other green stormwater management design initiatives to all new WPD facility and parking areas, including the lakefront.

I continue to support low cost and high return green facility initiatives, such as low flow plumbing fixtures, collections and use of recycled materials, LED lighting, bottle fill stations, smart building technology, and increased energy efficiency initiatives. Although sympathetic, I welcome community input and discussion before fully committing to more cutting edge green technology.

Gordon Anderson: We should ensure that the landscaping in 2017 projects at West Park and later projects such as the Beach House and parking at the Lakefront take advantage of the opportunity to incorporate sustainable elements such as native plants and prairie grasses, where appropriate.

As we do planning in the future, we need to share the plans with local groups who have environmental knowledge so that the Park District can benefit from their ideas and expertise. And, continuing to involve the community in the funding and execution of the new projects and programs as was accomplished with the Bird Habitat last September, is a “win” all around for everyone, including the taxpayers.

Chris Lewis: My primary concern with my term would be to advocate for keeping with the recent Wilmette Park District lakefront survey, where the number one and two concerns of all respondents were “Preserving Natural Open Spaces” and “Replacing/Upgrading Storm Sewers”. The current plans for rebuilding the Gillson Beach House and parking lot in 2018 are not the top concerns presented by our community and certainly not aligned to preserving the “less is more” thoughts of much of the Save Wilmette Beaches movement.

The proposed Gillson Beach House project is a large building in an area that is truly deserving of a smaller facility that reflects the desire for natural and open spaces. As a Park Board

Commissioner, I would fight against any large expensive structure when a smaller, more cost appropriate one would do.

I'm also very concerned with any potential lake water contamination that the proposed fully permeable parking lot could cause. I believe that there should be studies performed this summer to determine the extent of any potential drinking water contamination that the Gillson parking lot redesign might cause.

Actively working with the community by listening to their feedback would prevent much of the bad feelings that were caused by the Master Lakefront Referendum. I strongly believe that pursuing Gillson's Beach House without first addressing the community's number one and number two concerns just flaunts the current Board's disregard for our community.

Amy Wolfe: Many times, programming in the park district is based on the needs or wants of the residents. If there was a desire for more environmental or nature based programming, I would be in support of that. Because of past input, we have created several nature-based classes at the park district. Additionally, the Park District partners with Go Green Wilmette to do bird walks at Gillson and tree walks at Mallinckrodt. We also work with the Little Garden Club of Wilmette to do garden walks at Gillson Park.

In order to involve members of the community, I would try to communicate with the residents what we are doing and invite them to participate when possible through our monthly email communications and our leisure guide.

HABITAT AND NATURE PROGRAMMING

3. How can the Board best support staff's ability to increase native habitat within Wilmette parks and promote the community's enjoyment and exploration of our natural areas?

Bryan Abbott: I strongly support the Wilmette Park District's native plant initiatives in our parks. In my 17 years as an adult Boy Scout leader, I have mentored a number of Eagle Scout projects that specifically address native plantings, and I continue to do so. I work with the Scouts and with staff to successfully complete these projects. Said projects call upon our youth to provide leadership in identifying and solving a specific native habitat issue in our parks. The Scout then recruits workers who volunteer hundreds of man-hours to complete their project, providing great value to the community, leadership opportunities to the youth, ecological improvements to our habitats, all at zero cost to the community. Conservation Eagle Projects are a tremendous benefit to everyone. Recently I mentored an Eagle Scout to plant Bed 5 in the Bird Habitat at Gillson. In 2000 my son and I also participated in the first dune grass planting at Gillson, which has had a dramatic and beneficial impact on reducing erosion and sand migration at our beaches. I am currently working with an Eagle Scout candidate, investigating additional bird habitat plantings for the Gillson Park bluff. This project would open up views of the lake, while

providing increased native planting for bluff stabilization and bird sanctuary. Furthermore, the WPD is in the process of adding educational signage to the prairie preserve at Centennial Park.

Gordon Anderson: I believe the key to increasing native habitat is to plan ahead. The ability to properly present the merits of a native habitat opportunity, without time constraints pressuring decisions and unnecessarily restricting discussion, is key. Residents need time to review proposals and get their questions answered. This back and forth will build support and awareness, and give WPD necessary input from interested residents.

Chris Lewis: In keeping with the thoughts of preserving our parks' open spaces, I'm firmly in the stance of looking to improve landscaping and clearing overgrowth in Wilmette's parks. There has been a lack of landscaping of our parks over the years, and moving towards a plan to continuously maintain the landscaping rather than only when they are growing out of control would help improve the overall impression of our parks.

Our community should certainly be involved in these projects. The recent work by the Ouilmette Foundation and the Friends of Elmwood Dunes have shown that our community consists of many volunteer oriented citizens and encouraging community contribution should be a high priority of the Wilmette Park District.

Amy Wolfe: As a member of the Wilmette Park Board, one of the critical responsibilities is listening to community members' opinions. One of the biggest responses we heard from the community survey was to increase the natural plantings in our parks. In recent years, we have created a prairie garden at Centennial and installed native plantings at the golf course in response to residents' requests. As the chairperson for the Parks and Recreation committee, I have tasked the staff with looking at the overall plantings in each park. My hope is that we will be able to create a database of what is planted in each park, what needs to be removed, and what should be added. With this information, we should be able to enhance our parks to be even more beautiful than they are now.

CLEAN ENERGY

4. Would you consider supporting a community solar project on top of a park district structure, to save the district money over time, contribute to climate change solutions, and support Illinois' growing clean energy economy? Why or why not?

Bryan Abbott: Thorough analysis of cost/benefits are a central tenant of both my candidacy and my tenure on the board of commissioners. I believe that I have the unique skills on the board to thoroughly analyze both the cost and the economic payback of a solar system. I also have the background to assure that these building systems are properly designed and implemented. I am inclined to support such initiatives, especially where savings can be shown. I also fully acknowledge that the benefits of these initiatives go beyond simple economics, but when we cannot show economic payback, then it is incumbent on the board to ask our community before approving such a project. One of the positive developments that I've seen in

my time in this industry is the increasing cost competitiveness of green technologies. The balance is quickly tipping towards real economic savings. Green is no longer just an esoteric social goal. It can be the smart economic choice.

Gordon Anderson: I would support a solar project on a Park District structure as a statement in support of sustainable practices. My preference would be that the roof on which the panels stand have recently been sealed, that American-made solar panels be used, and that the cost of the solar project be split between the WPD, community groups, and any other utility or government source of credits that may be available.

I would recommend that WPD's share of the cost be equal to the projected electric cost savings over a period of time, perhaps seven to ten years, with the balance of the project cost then being picked up by any available credits and community groups. This arrangement would benefit the taxpayers by providing a return over time in excess of the upfront investment, while promoting the sustainable practices encouraged by interested third parties.

Chris Lewis: Global warming and climate change are one of the largest issues facing ourselves and our children. Renewable energy projects on community facilities should be strongly encouraged. With the planned roof reconstruction on Centennial Recreation Complex in 2018 installing a solar project on the roof should be a requirement.

Other buildings could be approached on a building versus cost basis. Grants for these costs should be pursued in order to reduce direct costs to our community.

Amy Wolfe: I would support a solar project on top of one of the park district buildings. I think that not only could it save the park district money in the long term, but it would be great for our community. I think the more projects that can be done using green solutions, the better for our local environment. I would be in favor of doing our due diligence and looking to other communities that have completed solar projects. I would be interested in knowing if they are seeing the return on investment, as well as a high energy standard. Additionally, as good financial managers of the park district budget, I think we must weigh the cost benefits of a green solution to what regular practices might be. If there is not a strong financial case for a solar solution, I do not think I could get behind the project.

5. How could the Park District improve energy efficiency and energy conservation within its facilities and programs, and how might the Board assist in the implementation of such efforts?

Bryan Abbott: I suggest the WPD investigate capturing the excess heat thrown off by our ice rink chillers, and using this excess to heat the water in our swimming pools. Currently our pools are heated with gas fired boilers. I believe that we can both save money and help the environment – another win-win.

The WPD has been installing smart building management systems in our facilities and I continue to support this. It's an economical idea.

All new and renovated facilities should incorporate energy efficiency and energy conservation practices, where economical. With my background in design and construction I bring considerable experience to the board in its implementation.

Gordon Anderson: While the Park District has embraced the basics of energy conservation as part of their normal routine, metrics measuring the current energy usage and our performance versus efficiency goals should be reported. As a Board, we are accustomed to receiving a great deal of information in Committee and Board packets and meetings. However, we do not see much related to energy usage or efficiency today.

By requesting the Park District Staff present the current status of energy usage and efficiency as well as our performance against goals, we can bring visibility to these opportunities, which would by definition also have cost savings as another benefit. Appropriate actions could then be proposed and discussed by the Board, staff and public, before the Board gives the staff clear direction.

Chris Lewis: One of the more recent technology innovations for the home are Smart Thermostats such as Google's Nest and the Ecobee products. These allow for controlling your heating and cooling needs via websites and apps and remotely adjusting your systems. Similar commercial products such as Ecobee's EMS si system (<https://www.ecobee.com/energy-management-system-si/>) for use in all the facilities would allow for significant cost savings by scheduling heating and cooling, quickly responding to weather changes, and allowing remote alerting for issues with the systems.

I'd also push for a ban on Park District supplied plastic water bottles and encourage refillable water bottles and fountains in all our facilities.

Amy Wolfe: The park district does a great job of being energy efficient currently. Most of the lights in our buildings are on motion sensors, so they are only in use when people are present. All of the standard washroom fixtures in the park district facilities utilize water reduction mechanisms. In 2016 the Park District installed an updated energy management system at the Community Recreation Center that gives the staff better control of exterior lighting and HVAC functions to increase energy conservation. In 2013 during the ice rink renovation project, a number of energy enhancements were added to reduce the cost to operate the facility. When the lighting at the tennis facility was updated, we were able to reduce power consumption by 40%. Finally, when upgrading any equipment that draws energy, we look for pieces that are more energy efficient than what we had before.

As a board, I think we can try to suggest ways for the staff to be more efficient. For example, I think we could reduce the amount of paper we use. I would love to see more documents electronically produced, so as not to waste paper. In addition, as we are looking at the

construction of the new beach house at Gillson, I would ask the staff to look at ways to be more energy efficient there.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

6. What do you see as the best green infrastructure practices for reducing flooding within park district properties or neighboring areas?

Bryan Abbott: We are all neighbors and the WPD does its part in local stormwater management. We already have stormwater detention systems at Centennial, West Park, Community Playfields, our Golf course and two detention areas at Mallinckrodt. In addition, because the parks are naturally green, they soak up enormous amounts of stormwater. In my tenure on the board we worked hand-in-hand with the Village to create a 5,500,000 gallon stormwater detention tank in West Park. I believe that the WPD must do its part to be a partner in effective and economical stormwater management for the village. Regarding green infrastructure, the prairie preserve at Centennial is a great example of providing natural stormwater management, while at the same time providing a natural habitat. Not only does this prairie preserve capture and hold stormwater, but it also is very effective at recharging the ground water table. At the lakefront, I strongly support using bio-swales to naturally capture and release stormwater to the lake.

Gordon Anderson: Each location is unique, but the first place to start is ensuring that the current infrastructure is being properly maintained and working as intended. Too often there are obstructions that go unnoticed that limit the capacity and effectiveness of the tiles, drains, culverts, pipes, swales, etc.

I am a proponent of using permeable pavers or spaced brick as an element of paving design from both an aesthetic and practical perspective. The benefits of limiting the environmental and financial cost of maintaining blacktop parking lots, turning what is ordinarily an eyesore into an interesting complement to the landscaping, and the longer life of pavers or brick outweigh the larger upfront cost.

Where practical, cisterns and retention ponds may play a role in capturing water that would otherwise contribute to flooding.

With regards to all of the above, my preference is to make these changes once the existing infrastructure has reached the end of its useful life, and the incremental costs over traditional practices can be minimized.

Finally, given the close ties between the Park District and the Village, coordination between the two entities is critical.

Chris Lewis: Storm water management is a big concern in Wilmette, and the Park District should be a strong supporter in remediating these issues. Permeable surfaces for playgrounds, better drainage systems in our parks and potentially using the parks as overflow areas are all possible solutions to Wilmette's storm water issues. Working with the Village on projects like the West Park Sanitary Storage could possibly reduce the costs of the current 70 million dollar West Wilmette sewer proposal.

Amy Wolfe: The park district has implemented many flood reducing practices in our parks in the recent past. These green infrastructure practices include constructing bioswales on the golf course and installing rain gardens in Mallinckrodt park, the Thornwood Park ice rink area, the Community Tennis Courts, and the Shorewood Park Tot Lot. Finally, one of the largest flood reducing practices was the construction of the prairie garden at the Centennial park which absorbs water from storm runoff at Centennial. Unfortunately at some of our larger parks, Gillson and the Community Playfields, drainage is still an issue, so flooding remains an active problem. At Gillson, we will be replacing the beach parking in order to reduce constant flooding there. At the Community Playfields, the solution is more difficult due to the heavy use of the fields and the homes that surround it. The board would need to work with the staff to determine the best green solutions to reduce possible future water there. Overall, the Park District has been a good steward in the community by keeping storm water within it's boundaries and eliminating it with minimal outflow to storm sewers.