



APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT TO YPSILANTI CITY COUNCIL WARD #2 POSITION

Applicant Information

(Please type or print)

Applicant Name Benjamin Connor Barrie

Residence Address 1111 Westmoorland, Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Home Phone [REDACTED] Work Phone [REDACTED]

E-Mail [REDACTED]

Cover Letter & Resume

Please attach a one page cover letter and a resume of no more than two pages to this application.

Supplemental Questions

Please respond to the following questions regarding your interest in the position of Councilmember for the City of Ypsilanti on separate pages using no more than 3 pages total:

1. Why are you interested in serving as an Ypsilanti City Councilmember?
2. What strength would you bring to the Council?
3. What are the three highest priorities and/or issues you believe the City needs to address? How would you propose to address these issues?
4. Explain your current and past community involvement and/or service on city, nonprofit, or public boards, committees, task forces, or commissions and how this has contributed to the Ypsilanti community. Address its relevance to the position of Ypsilanti City Councilmember.
5. What do you wish to accomplish during this appointed term as an Ypsilanti City Councilmember?
6. What is your vision for our City and community?
7. Is there anything else that you may wish to add that would help us get to know you a little better?

Please return (*in person*) this form, your cover letter, resume, and answers to the supplemental questions to the City Clerk, at Ypsilanti City Hall (1 S. Huron St.) **no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, November 27, 2018.**

Applications received after 5:00 p.m. will not be accepted.

The application and any correspondence should be addressed to:

**Frances McMullan, City Clerk
City of Ypsilanti
One South Huron Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197**

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

I am writing to submit my application to fill the Ward 2 Comuncilmember vacancy. I have lived in Normal Pari for the last 5 years. Over this time, I have come to know this wonderful, diverse, vibrant community. I am currently a member of the Ypsilanti's Parks and Recreation Commission and seek to expand my service to this city that I love. I have a diverse background and the skills I've picked up on my journey would make me a strong asset to the city: leadership, flexibility, comfort with ambiguity, a researcher's attention to detail, and an analytical orientation. I want to serve my community and being on Ypsilanti's City Council is the best way for me to do that.

I think Ypsilanti is at a crossroads. We are a decade past the recession and our municipal finances are on a good footing. However, recent rent and home price increases threaten to displace vulnerable populations from our community. I want to serve on Ypsilanti City Council so that I can help to guide the city through this period while maintaining fiscal stability. I am also interested in non-motorized transit and improving our park facilities.

I am passionate about helping to make our city a diverse, fun, healthy, vibrant place. I would relish the opportunity to serve the community as a Councilmember.

Thank you for your consideration,

Benjamin Connor Barrie

Benjamin T. Connor Barrie

1111 Westmoorland St.
Ypsilanti, MI 48197



Education

MS, School of Natural Resources & Environment, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
Natural Resources – Conservation Ecology – 2012

BA, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, MI
Major: Biology, Concentration: Environmental Studies – 2006

Experience

Program Manager – Duo Security, 2018 – present:

Lead Engineering Onboarding Program
Designed learning and development program for Research and Development Team

Commissioner – City of Ypsilanti Parks and Recreation Commission, 2017 – Present:

Helped develop park improvement plan
Worked with groups of residents to plan for Riverside Park Playground
Helped assess needs of each park in Ypsilanti

Lecturer – Eastern Michigan University & Washtenaw Community College, 2016 – present:

Courses: Ecology, Genetics, Botany, Introduction to biology

Editor/Publisher – www.damnarbor.com, 2010 – present:

Covered local news and culture for the Ypsi-Arbor area
Managed a local news website and associated social media accounts
Recruited a team of contributing writers

Education Specialist – Detroit Zoo, 2015 – 2016:

Lead the redesign of curation for the Arctic Ring of Life, the Zoo's second largest habitat
Designed educational elements of the new penguin habitat
Worked to incorporate climate change messaging into all zoo exhibits

Graduate Student/Researcher – School of Natural Resources and Environment, 2009 – 2015:

Designed and conducted a multi-year field study of urban forest ecology in Southeast Michigan
Created a hierarchical Bayesian model to predict tree performance in urban and rural environments
Contributed to the publication of 2 meta-analyses

Senior Graduate Student Instructor – Woody Plants, University of Michigan, 2010 - 2014:

Head instructor for field portion of class of approximately 50 students
Wrote syllabus for lab portion of class & aided professor in syllabus development for lecture portion
Taught pedagogy and instruction techniques to two junior GSIs each year
Developed new instruction & supplemental material for students struggling in class
Coordinated both assessment design and grading for field & lecture portion of class

Project manager – Appropriate Technology Collaborative, 2009 - 2012:

Led teams of engineering students working on sustainable development projects in Guatemala

Arranged for in-country logistics including housing, transportation, and supply procurement
Served as a Spanish language interpreter for meetings with municipal officials and skilled tradespeople

Skills

Python, R, Data analysis, Data management, Statistical modeling, GIS, Tree identification, Web publishing, Teaching, Public Speaking, Writing, Editing, Written and Spoken Spanish

Publications

Connor Barrie, B. T., 2018. The ABCs of affordability in Washtenaw County. *Concentrate*.

Connor Barrie, B. T., 2017. Is there still time to nip Ypsi's affordability crisis in the bud?. *Concentrate*.

Iverson, A., Marín, L., Ennis, K., Gonthier, D., **Connor Barrie, B. T.**, Remfert, J., Cardinale, B., Perfecto, I., 2014. Does crop diversity promote win-wins or tradeoffs in agricultural ecosystem services? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Ecology*

Katz, D. S. W., **Connor Barrie, B. T.**, and Carey, T. S., 2014. Urban ragweed populations in vacant lots: an ecological perspective on management. *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening*

Ibáñez, I., Katz, D. S. W., Peltier, D., Wolf, S., and **Connor Barrie, B. T.** 2014. Assessing the integrated effects of landscape fragmentation on plants and plant communities: The challenge of multiprocess-multiresponse dynamics. *Journal of Ecology*

Girdler, E. B., and **Connor Barrie, B. T.**, 2008. The scale-dependent importance of habitat factors and dispersal limitation in structuring Great Lakes shoreline plant communities. *Plant Ecology*

Conference Presentations

"Native tree seedlings exhibit greater mortality in urban forests across an anthropogenic land use gradient" Poster Presentation. ESA, 2013 Minneapolis, MN

"The impacts of land-uses on the survival and growth of tree seedlings" Oral Presentation. ESA, 2012, Portland, OR.

"Land use alters seedling recruitment patterns along an urban-rural gradient" Oral Presentation. ESA, 2011, Austin, TX.

Grants

McIntire-Stennis Fellowship, 2010, \$50,000, Co-PI with I. Ibáñez

Benjamin Connor Barrie
Ward 2 Councilmember Application, Supplemental Questions

1. Why are you interested in serving as an Ypsilanti City Councilmember?

I have lived in Ypsilanti for the past 5 years. In this time, I have come to know a wonderful, diverse community filled with outstanding people. I am seeking this role because it would give me the opportunity to serve this community that I love and affect positive change.

2. What strength would you bring to the Council?

I bring an understanding of and passion for local government a strong analytical skill set and a dedication to our community.

I have been covering local issues in Washtenaw County for several years, first through the website I founded, Damn Arbor and now as an occasional writer for Concentrate. Through my coverage of City Council meetings I have learned a great deal about how local government works. I am also passionate about the way that local government can have a positive impact in the lives of residents. I will bring this passion to my service on Ypsilanti's City Council.

Before I began my career in tech, I was pursuing a doctorate studying forest ecology at the School of Natural Resources and Environment at U of M. There I cultivated a strong analytical toolset. As a scientist, I had to attack complex problems with data. My analytical mindset will help me tackle complex issues facing the city.

Finally, I am a passionate champion for Ypsilanti. I love this community, its history, and the people that call it home. I want desire to serve my community and I will bring tireless energy to my service of the community.

3. What are the three highest priorities and/or issues you believe the City needs to address? How would you propose to address these issues?

I think the biggest challenges facing Ypsilanti are affordability, financial stability, and safety for non-motorized transportation.

One of Ypsilanti's greatest strengths is its diversity. Unfortunately, Ypsilanti is becoming less affordable and this is a threat to our diversity. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the median rent in the city was \$703 per month between 2006 and 2010. Between 2011 and 2015 median rent rose to \$746, a 6.1% increase. This jump has been driven, in part, by an increase in population. Between 2010 and 2016 Ypsi was Michigan's fifth fastest-growing city, adding 1,583 residents to reach a population of just over 21,000. During this time, there has been no substantial increase in housing stock in the city. Home sale prices are also up. Thus, the recent increases in residential rents can be attributed to increased residential demand with no increase

in supply. The increased demand on housing has been exacerbated by stagnant or decreasing wages for many Ypsi residents. Between 2010 and 2015 the median income in Ypsi dropped from \$34,685 to \$31,061, a decrease of about 10%.

People are being squeezed out of our community. I think it is important that the city do what it can to protect vulnerable populations from displacement. Specifically, if I were on council I would propose that they city leverage the sale of city owned land for the creation of affordable housing. I also think the city should explore the creation of a Community Land Trust to help residents become homeowners and to stabilize increases in home prices. Finally, though it may only play a small role in increasing housing stock, Ypsilanti should explore allowing accessory unit dwellings in more residential zoned areas.

Municipal financing in Michigan is broken. The combination of the Headlee Amendment and Prop A mean that property tax revenue can ratchet down quickly, but can only ever increase at the rate of inflation. Also, the state has not been meeting its obligations for revenue sharing. With the passage of the Water Street Millage, Ypsilanti is on a relatively stable financial footing for the time being. As we consider re-establishing services that were cut during the recession, it's important to keep in mind the next recession, whenever that may be. The only real way the city can increase property tax revenue at a rate greater than inflation is through new construction. I think it's important for the city to explore ways to encourage new construction (perhaps through increasing where accessory dwelling units can be built). I also think it's important to keep in mind that at some point in the next 10 years, we will probably have a housing bubble burst and/or another recession. We need to keep that in mind as we establish services.

Ypsilanti has a lot of MDOT roads. These roads seem to be designed with the idea of moving visitors through our community, rather than for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers who live here. The M-17 corridor in particular splits the city into several islands surrounded by pedestrian hostile roads. I am currently part of a group of concerned citizens working with State Rep. Jeff Irwin to lobby MDOT to reduce speeds and lanes on M-17 when they resurface it between 2020 and 2022. If I were on council I would continue to work on this project as well as advocate for conversion of one way streets to two way traffic.

4. Explain your current and past community involvement and/or service on city, nonprofit, or public boards, committees, task forces, or commissions and how this has contributed to the Ypsilanti community. Address its relevance to the position of Ypsilanti City Councilmember.

I currently serve on the City of Ypsilanti Parks and Recreation Commission. Through my service I have come to know residents from all over the city. I have also learned a great deal about the inner workings of the municipal government. My understanding of municipal government and process will serve me well as a member of Ypsilanti's City Council.

I was also a volunteer for Citizens for Ypsi, the group that got the Water Street Millage on the August 2017 Ballot. Through collecting petition signatures I met with residents from all over the city and heard their concerns.

5. What do you wish to accomplish during this appointed term as an Ypsilanti City Councilmember?

My top priority is to tackle the affordable housing. I hope hold the rate of rental price increase to less than the rate of inflation. I would also like to allow accessory dwelling units to be built in more residential areas. I would like to lead a task force exploring how a community land trust would work in Ypsilanti and propose an ordinance to create one. Finally, I would want to end my service to the city leaving it in a better financial footing than when I started.

6. What is your vision for our City and community?

As Ypsilanti continues to grow, I want the city to remain a place everyone can make a home. I want the city to stay a diverse, vibrant place. I see Ypsilanti in the future with a few more people, from all walks of life. I see new, local businesses and vibrant parks. I see Ypsilanti as a safe community for pedestrians and cyclists. I see a vibrant downtown and Depot Town. I want to work on realizing this vision through my service on City Council.

7. Is there anything else that you may wish to add that would help us get to know you a little better?

I was not able to work this into any of the other responses but I feel like it is important. I worked as a public school teacher in Chicago before starting my graduate studies. I am passionate about Public Education. I know that Ypsilanti City Council has very limited direct impact on the Ypsilanti Community School District, I am excited about the possibility of working to help improve our local public schools.