



Sustainable City Planning: A Look at Godfrey Trustee Candidate, Virginia Woulfe-Beile

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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GODFREY – A local environmentalist has declared her candidacy for Godfrey Trustee at the upcoming April 2 election.

Virginia Woulfe-Beile has been with the Piasa Palisades chapter of the Sierra Club for the better part of a decade and has been working in the interests of municipalities for nearly three decades. She said she wants her candidacy to represent practical future development for the Village of Godfrey. That development, she said, would take into account both the vast size of Godfrey – it is the second largest municipality in Illinois (just behind Chicago) based on land mass alone – as well as its needs regarding transportation and public services.

During an interview with Riverbender.com Thursday afternoon, Woulfe-Beille was concerned about small businesses in Godfrey operated by its residents as well as ensuring transportation options continued to funnel visitors and residents alike to the village's business districts. She lauded the village's decision not to continue its work on the Lars Hoffman bypass, which she worried would take people straight from I-255 to Grafton, completely ignoring Godfrey's main business district.

“It might have had some development, but it would have been too far remote from the hub,” she said.

Proximity to the hub is something Woulfe-Beille spoke about frequently regarding Godfrey's future. She said she wanted to see more foresight done in transportation planning, for the purposes of commuters, businesses, city planning, and the environment. She described such planning as “long-term” and “goal-oriented.”

Currently, Woulfe-Beille sits on Godfrey's Climate Protection and Energy Efficiency Committee as its chairperson. That committee was created by the Cool Cities Initiative, which itself was adopted by the United States Conference of Mayors, and is based on the Kyoto Protocol. The committee's efforts are to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in municipalities.

“We report to the trustees every month,” she said. “Our goal is to reduce greenhouse gases, which ultimately reduces costs for the village. It's a win-win.”

Woulfe-Beille has helped other nearby municipalities through her work at the Sierra Club applying for grants. She has helped municipalities desperately in need, such as Madison, Venice, and Brooklyn, and even helped Granite City attain a fleet of 23 electric vehicles. She said she would like to bring that knowledge and experience to the Village of Godfrey in order to help it get money from local, state and federal sources.

“That is the kind of experience Godfrey needs,” she said. “Godfrey is great for fiscal responsibility. There are lots of parks and open spaces to protect. We want to make sure everyone has access to those areas.”

When asked where Godfrey needed to improve, she said the area of city planning is somewhat lacking. She said more thought should go into future development within the village, especially considering its massive size and its need for public services. With only two fire stations within that size, ensuring the safety of remote developments through fire protection as well as good roads and transportation infrastructure.

If elected, Woulfe-Beile said she would work toward “big picture” thinking in future planning through the village, saying she wanted to continue Godfrey's fiscal responsibility while adding to it a sort of sustainability, which would ensure whatever funds were spent were spent the best way they could be.

“I believe TIF money should be spent on small business development, so we can help our residents,” she said. “I don't think we should spend it on big corporations. They should have their own resources to use for opening businesses. I don't want our TIF money going toward corporate welfare.”

When asked about the recent solution to dissolve the township, which will come to fruition in May, Woulfe-Beille said the voters have spoken, adding she could see how the village and township did share a few services, causing a bit of a redundancy.

If any other candidate or issue advocate would like a profile, they should text or phone Reporter Cory Davenport at (618) 419-3046