

Council candidates differ on financial disclosure

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By Daniel Sturm

Kathy Pelleran and Brian Jeffries, the candidates for Lansing City Council in the Nov. 5 general election, are trying to demonstrate financial and interest-group transparency.

Pelleran released her federal, state and local income tax returns Sept. 9. Jeffries countered the next day by filing the financial disclosure statement required only after elected officials have already taken office.

"In order to have confidence that their elected officials are acting in the city's best interests and not for personal gain," Pelleran said in a news release, "I believe the public has the right to know what candidates and elected officials have as income and where it is derived."

She called on Jeffries to release tax information as well. Jeffries declined, saying in an interview that doing so was neither required nor necessary.

According to Pelleran's tax return for 2001, her only earned income was as the state director of "Fight Crime: Invest in Kids," a nonprofit organization, was \$46,736. She paid \$7,419 in federal taxes, \$1,699 in state taxes and \$444 in city taxes. Pelleran received unemployment benefits after her contract as government relations director for the Michigan Chiropractic Society ended in February 2001. She began working as director of "Fight Crime" one month later. She is a trustee of Lansing Community College, which is an unpaid position. Pelleran has announced she will resign from LCC if elected in order to avoid any conflict of interest. Her term expires in 2007.

According to the 2000 U.S Census data for Lansing, Pelleran's single income is slightly higher than the median household average income of \$34,833 and falls within the 49.7 percent of residential households in

Lansing with income of more than \$35,000 a year.

Jeffries denied any potential conflict of interest if elected in his statement of financial interests and said he would not derive income or benefit directly from any contract with the city. Jeffries is a partner in the law firm of Jeffries and Newton, which provides legal services exclusively to the undergraduate (ASMSU) and graduate (COGS) student governing bodies at Michigan State University. Although he is a member of two community organizations, the Lansing Art Gallery and the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition, "I do not, nor do I have any family members who serve on the Board of Directors of these groups, nor receive any income from them whatsoever."

Jeffries said that he wished to complete his term as LCC trustee, which ends June 30, 2003.

"If a conflict arises in any of the positions disclosed herein, I will recuse myself from voting on matters concerning the particular group or, if required, discontinue my relationship with the organization." Besides several other community organizations, Jeffries is a member of the South Lansing Business Association and the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce.

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