

## **Keith Pekau for Mayor Bio**

Keith Pekau was elected Mayor of Orland Park in April 2017 in his first run for elected office.

As Mayor, Keith has worked with the Orland Park Village Board to reduce the village's operational budget by 13.9% and debt by approximately \$37 million. This has allowed the village to lower property taxes while making additional investments in our roads, infrastructure, and parks.

When elected, Keith fulfilled his campaign promise and turned down the lucrative pension put in place by his predecessor. He then worked with the village board to eliminate pensions for all elected officials in Orland Park. As a strong believer in citizens government over career politicians, Keith worked to get term limits on the ballot and saw the referendum pass with nearly 89% of the vote in November 2020.

During his tenure, Keith proactively worked to reduce crime in Orland Park, leading to the lowest village crime rate in over a quarter-century. He works closely with regional municipal and business partners, co-founded the Chicago Southland Interstate Alliance, an I-80 corridor development group, and is on the board of the I-80 Coalition. When three major retail companies went out of business in February 2018, Keith led the efforts to find sustainable replacements to keep tax revenue flowing into the village.

Keith is a decorated combat veteran and Air Force Instructor Weapons System Officer in the F-15E. He has over 1,500 hours of flight time, including 45 combat sorties and 150 combat hours over southern Iraq.

After leaving the Air Force, Keith was a management consultant for two international consulting firms. In 2003, Keith started GroundsKeeper Landscape Care, a full-service landscaping and tree service company, which he sold in 2019. In 2009, Keith co-founded Fahrenheit Consulting which specializes in helping businesses develop market growth strategies.

Mayor Pekau was born and raised in Orland Park. As a boy, Keith played OYA baseball and basketball and was on the first Pioneer football team. He attended Carl Sandburg High School and after high school, Keith graduated from Arizona State University with a B.S. in Aerospace Engineering and joined the United States Air Force. While in the Air Force, Keith earned his M.B.A. from Duke University and was a Fuqua Scholar.

# 2021 ILLINOIS MUNICIPAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Running for:  Mayor/Village President  Trustee/Alderman

Municipality: Village President

Keith Pekau  
First & Last Name

708-670-9573  
Campaign Phone

10640 Bomzejn Pl  
Campaign Address

Campaign Fax

Orland Park IL 60462  
City State Zip

mayorkeithpekau@gmail.com  
Campaign Email

List any local manufacturers who are supporting your candidacy:

Name	Company

**(Please provide a 1-page bio with this questionnaire)**

## QUESTIONS

### TAXATION

Despite the significant challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, U.S. manufacturing continues to thrive in the global marketplace, especially here in Illinois. The Chicago metropolitan area contains five out of the 10 most concentrated manufacturing zip codes in America.

But external factors continue to place Illinois manufacturers in a precarious position. In Illinois, we pay some of the highest sales, property and income taxes in the United States. In a global economy, Illinois-based manufacturers compete nationally and internationally for work.

Tax demands, in addition to business expenses, may determine whether bids are won or lost. Losing bids risk good-paying jobs and the generous economic benefits resulting from Illinois-based manufacturing.

Do you support/oppose allowing local governments to abate all or a portion of their property tax for small manufacturers?  Support  Oppose

Do you support/oppose freezing the municipal tax levy at its current amount so the tax rate can start to come down and property owners can begin to see much needed tax relief?  Support  Oppose  
*our levy was frozen for 10 years and we just lowered it by 3%. The property tax issue is about the schools and fire districts, none of which have frozen their levy.*

*In orland we are less than 76 of taxbill. The focus needs to be on these other taxing bodies not on our village.*

Do you support/oppose creating a tax exemption for energy used in the manufacturing process?  Support  Oppose  
*We should lower energy taxes for everyone not just exempt manufacturing. If needed for a specific industry it should be considered on a case by case basis.*

Do you support/oppose adding purchases of production-related, tangible personal property to manufacturing machinery and equipment exempted from sales tax?  Support  Oppose  
*We should lower sales taxes for everyone not just single out certain groups. However the state needs to focus more on the pension problem first.*

**MINIMUM WAGE**

Governor Pritzker signed a massive minimum wage increase into law in 2019 that will nearly double the minimum wage in Illinois over the next few years. The latest increase to \$11/hour kicked in on Jan. 1, 2021 and will increase \$1/hour each year until it reaches \$15/hour by 2025. Such a drastic minimum wage increase will surge costs for Illinois employers and lead to layoffs and fewer opportunities for young people and less-skilled workers.

Do you support/oppose the phase in of the state minimum wage to \$15/hour by 2025?  Support  Oppose  
*I oppose all minimum wage increases. The market should define.*

Would you encourage legislators to support/oppose amending the law to create a regional implementation plan where areas with a higher cost of living (ie. Chicago) would face a higher minimum wage than suburban or downstate regions?  Support  Oppose  
*I don't want any increases to minimum wage. I do not support the legislature picking winners & losers.*

Do you support/oppose a lower minimum wage (training wage) for teenagers who work less than 650 hours/year?  Support  Oppose  
*Although, again, the market should set minimum wage.*

**REGULATION**

Manufacturing in the United States has changed, becoming more precise and higher value thanks to improved technology and cloud-based manufacturing. We are leading the way with performance and technological advances resulting in high-paying, high-performance jobs for skilled American workers.

Overly burdensome regulations at the federal, state and local levels stifle innovation, invade a company's culture, impact its productivity and, inevitably, thwart its bottom line. Employers already understand their employees' safety and happiness are crucial to their company's success and reason enough for investment. That's why nearly all TMA employers already offer vacation and sick days, employee training, and commonly offer salaries starting at 25 percent above the impending minimum wage.

Manufacturing operations often require special needs that don't fit perfectly into municipal zoning classifications. Do you support/oppose providing flexibility through variances to allow manufacturing companies to locate or expand in your community?  Support  Oppose

If elected, would you support/oppose waiving or reducing tap-on fees and/or providing other incentives to encourage manufacturers to build new facilities in your municipality?  Support  Oppose  
*we already have put such programs in place under my tenure.*

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed enormous strains on manufacturers, who have faced significant interference from the State of Illinois while trying to provide essential products our society needs. Our manufacturing facilities are already among the safest and healthiest workplaces with employee health and safety the top priority. Do you support/oppose the Illinois mandatory lockdowns that have limited commerce here while manufacturers in surrounding states prosper?  Support  Oppose  
*My record on this is well established.*

**GENERAL** (Please answer each question in 150 words or less – feel free to provide answers on a separate sheet)

1) Why are you running for office?

ANSWER: I have been in office for 1 term. During this time I have uncovered many problems in the village. First our capital needs have been kicked down the road as the previous administration (also my opponent) spent over \$100 million from 2000-2016 to purchase property and play developer. Our ~~the~~ parks were fixed at a rate of 1 every 2 years (we have 66 parks). Over 40% of our roads in poor condition and our average age of vehicle fleet is 12.5 years, including our police fleet which is less than 4. We now have a plan in motion to fix that backlog & put us on a long-term path. I also want to focus on diversifying our economy by bringing high-tech advanced manufacturing to the region. This is something ~~my~~ opponent drove out of Orland Park during his tenure.

2) What do you hope to accomplish if you are elected?

ANSWER: Continue our fiscal discipline & fix our capital issues. In my first 4 years we have reduced FTEs by 9.5% our operating budget by 14% and lowered debt by \$37 million (even with COVID). We need to develop a true strategic plan that includes our capital plan & an economic development plan. I will also work ~~to~~ to pressure the state to solve our pension crisis. If the state does nothing about that, all the good we do locally will be wasted. I also want to work with the state and region to bring businesses into the region. Illinois should be an economic engine for this country but state policies have stopped this. We must work together to get the state to act.

3) Why should a manufacturer support your candidacy?

ANSWER: I believe in market based solutions & reforms. I support lower taxes as that drives economic growth. I also support all efforts to rebuild our manufacturing base. My track record supporting manufacturing is well documented as is ~~my~~ my fiscal conservative small government approach. I worked tirelessly with Jimenez I'll miss to help promote our region for manufacturing opportunities. I think many of those opportunities do not fit in Orland Park there are many locations where ~~in~~ they do. Manufacturing has been lost in our region and it has devastated the regional economy. I believe that only a renaissance in manufacturing will bring that economic vitality back to this region.

Thank you for taking time to respond to our query. We will share your responses with TMA membership. Thank you for your interest in Illinois manufacturing and our industry's pertinent future in your community.



Candidate Signature

2/14/21

Date