

From: postmaster@muniweb.com
To: [Hanson, Cortney](#)
Subject: Application for City Council
Date: Wednesday, December 6, 2023 3:55:25 PM

Thank you for your interest

Name:

Sujata Raman

Nickname, if preferred:

Address:

50749 Chesapeake Drive

Preferred Phone Number:

3139718041

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sujata@ournovi.com

Are you a registered voter in the City of Novi?

Yes

How long have you lived continuously in the City of Novi?

12 years

Employed by:

Physician Anesthesiologists of the Motor City

Educational Background:

Attorney: J.D. from Michigan State University Law School Undergrad: Bachelor of Science in International Relations from Michigan State University - James Madison College

Please describe your professional qualifications, skills and/or work experience, and how you would use these to benefit the community.

I worked as a law clerk at Foster, Meadows and Ballard before earning my law degree from Michigan State University Law School. During law school, I was a member of the rental housing clinic, representing clients in eviction and other housing matters in Lansing courts. After earning my JD, I worked as a document review attorney in Chicago before taking a position with Prairie State Legal Services (Illinois Legal Aid) as a public interest attorney. In this role, I worked with clients that couldn't otherwise afford representation. For the past 10 years, I have served as the Director of Business Operations for an independent medical private practice where I manage contracts, client relations, business development, human resources, and finance.

Please list any City Board or Commission, or community group(s) you are currently or have previously been active. Describe your role and how your involvement contributed to the community.

I believe that my work experience as an attorney and as the Director of Business Operations of

a medical practice have provided me with ample experience with the legal, financial and communications expertise necessary to be an effective City Council member. My involvement in the community and Novi schools, detailed below, demonstrate that I am anchored in and dedicated to our community. 5,614 voters recognized my contributions to Novi and the professional skills that I can bring to City Council.

Describe your current and past volunteer involvement in or for the City?

I have been an active volunteer in Novi since moving to the city in 2011. I participate in road clean ups, garlic mustard pulls, and other efforts to keep our city clean and sustainable. With two school-aged children, I am regularly involved in their activities, volunteering with In the Mitten theater productions through Novi Parks and Recreation, Novi Black Frog Robotics team and the Girl Scouts. My children attend Novi Community School District where I volunteer for school and classroom events, and also serve on the NCSD Curriculum Parent Advisory Committee. Along with my family, I volunteer for and am a founding/life member of the Sri Venkateswara Temple and Cultural Center in Novi and the Jain Temple of Farmington Hills.

What motivated you to apply to serve on City Council?

I am applying to serve on City Council because of the support that I received from 5,614 Novi voters, from elected officials, and from the many additional community members who, although unable to vote, shared their voices with me throughout my campaign. I decided to run for City Council for many reasons, all of which center on listening to the community and protecting our future, and I feel I owe it to the community that supported my campaign to apply to serve on City Council. My decision to run for City Council was not made lightly, as it is a strenuous process and a huge responsibility for those elected. I was inspired first and foremost by my children, Arav and Avika. After many years of devoting my time to volunteering with Novi schools and activities, my children are becoming more independent as they get older. I believe it is my responsibility to do all I can to create a Novi that serves their needs, and the needs of all of our young people, so that they might choose to return to Novi and raise their own families here. Another reason I was moved to public service in Novi is the influence of my parents, who taught me the value of hard work, respect, and service to others. As my parents age, they want to be closer to their children and grandchildren in Novi. They also value the amazing amenities available to Novi residents, especially for older adults. As Indian Americans, they would love to be part of the diverse and welcoming community that they see here in Novi. Like many older adults, they are looking for the opportunity to downsize in Novi and this helped me to see that Novi's senior population needs leaders who will advocate for them and who view them as valued members of the community. Finally, I ran for City Council because I want ALL voices in Novi to be heard and represented. My focus throughout my campaign was to connect with as many Novi residents as possible. I focused not on the things that divide us, but on all the things we have in common: our community and our future. I spoke to high school students and retirees, because no matter your age, you should have a voice in our city. I spoke to people who have lived in Novi their whole lives and people who moved to Novi from Japan, India, Germany and all over the world, because I want our city to be a home to all of them. I spoke to Novi residents who live in our wealthiest neighborhoods and residents who live in our apartments, condominiums and manufactured homes because I believe that all of them deserve to be safe and included in our community. I ran for City Council because I love our city and the people who live here. I believe that I can bring a fresh perspective, new ideas, and true representation to the table. As an Indian American woman raising a young family in Novi, I have personal experiences that are different from other members of City Council. I am dedicated to working with all members

of City Council and learning from each other to make sure that the city we all love continues to thrive and grow.

If appointed, what do you hope to accomplish during your term? What do you hope to learn?

My number one goal if appointed to serve on City Council would be to bridge the divides that exist and work together as a team, united in our goal to serve our city and its residents. While we might all have different views and ideas, I know that we all share a desire for Novi to be the best it can be. We all want Novi to be a safe place to live, with excellent community services and resources, and a vibrant future. I believe that future should be guided by our community, and I would continue listening to residents to learn what they want and value, supporting the services and investments that matter to them most. Public safety is paramount and I hope to play a part in listening to the needs of first responders, addressing staffing concerns, supporting accreditation and re-accreditation processes, and investing in our facilities and equipment responsibly. During my term, I would like to work with our firefighters to address the staffing shortages that are impacting services throughout our area. I feel that by listening to our first responders we can more effectively make Novi an attractive employer and increase recruitment and retention to keep our residents safe. I envision continuing Novi's commitment to capital improvements including investing in infrastructure and roads, connecting walkways, and protecting and expanding parks and greenspaces. I view development as a responsibility to the community, and would examine proposals with a desire to diversify our tax base without compromising our city's character, quality of living or infrastructure. The needs of our older adult population, many of whom helped build our city, also matter to me. I'd like to ensure that they are able to stay connected and informed. One step towards accomplishing this is to broadcast not only City Council meetings but the meetings of our boards and commissions. I also support expanding transportation options for seniors, both through city-provided transportation and by working with Oakland County to ensure that the transit plan our residents pay for will benefit them. I share Novi's goal of expanding outreach to the Asian population and believe that, in addition to increasing accessibility through translation and broadcast of meetings, my personal experience as a member of the Indian community and the Sri Venkateswara Temple and Cultural Center would provide representation and connection to our Asian community. An Indian woman has never served on Novi City Council and I would be honored to give voice to these residents. If selected to serve, I will bring to City Council my desire to continuously learn and improve. I think one of the most important qualities a leader must have is the humility to know they are not an expert on everything. When making decisions, I will value the input of experts, I will examine the available data, I will hear from local stakeholders and I will work with all other council members to make the best possible decisions for our city. I know that I can learn much from the experiences of our current City Council members and look forward to sharing my personal experiences and knowledge to work with each of you effectively in support of our residents.

What do you think the City is doing well or could be doing differently when you think about the areas of responsibility for City Council?

Novi's repeated ranking as one of the best places to live and raise a family, and as the best school district in Michigan prove that there are many things the city is doing right. But there is always room to improve because that is what is demanded to remain the best. I'd like to see the city continue to foster partnerships with the school district and community organizations so that we can all work together to serve the needs of residents. The decisions of the city and of the school district impact each other -- for example, the growth of residential developments

may impact school enrollment, or the decision by the school district to build new facilities might lessen the need for the city to consider a similar project. The Bosco Field land swap was an example of effective partnership and I would like to keep those lines of communication open. I also believe that the city should continue to build cultural connections in our very diverse community, as this diversity is so often lauded as one of Novi's greatest assets. Our city leaders have made the effort to visit houses of worship, attend cultural celebrations, and recognize holidays and festivals, building a sense of community and cultural appreciation. This should continue and I also hope to see City Council work to increase the diversity of our boards and commissions and engage with diverse populations to guide decision making and investments. I support City Council's plan to create a sustainability committee to identify long-term opportunities and challenges and develop strategies to address them (<https://www.cityofnovi.org/government/city-council/>). The decisions our city leadership makes today will have an impact on Novi residents in the future, and I want Novi to remain a safe, welcoming, and thriving community. We need to think creatively about how to encourage developers to repurpose vacant properties like the former Whitehall nursing home. Development proposals should be thoroughly evaluated to ensure that any variances or zoning changes do not stress the existing infrastructure or the balance between residences, businesses and green spaces. In evaluating where the city can improve, I feel that resource allocation should be guided by the needs and desires of the community. When asked which community livability topics Novi should focus on improving, the overall quality of the utility infrastructure was prioritized by over 9 in 10 residents in the 2022 National Community Survey (<https://www.cityofnovi.org/community/national-citizens-survey-results/>). There was a decline in community ratings of multiple survey items that related to utility infrastructure, and I view this as an opportunity for improvement. Many of the issues cannot be solved by Novi City Council alone -- but this is exactly why I believe City Council has a responsibility to make connections throughout Michigan and to partner with neighboring communities to effectively address these issues. The concerns of residents about utility infrastructure should also be weighed in decision making about future development to ensure that new development does not strain the capabilities of existing infrastructure. Among the ten measures of livability included in the 2022 National Community Survey, mobility -- our available transportation options and ease of moving around the city -- was rated lowest. This is a great starting place for identifying where there are opportunities for improvement. The ongoing effort to create a more walkable Novi should continue and City Council should play an active role in working with Oakland County to provide mass transit options that benefit our residents. Rather than viewing our Senior Transport and Oakland County Transit as opposing plans, I would like to see these options work in concert to most effectively leverage tax dollars and improve transportation throughout the city. This would have the potential to decrease traffic, provide seniors with transportation beyond the city borders and on evenings and weekends, give parents new options for getting their children to and from activities safely, and provide economic benefit to businesses who struggle to find employees. I also want City Council to look for opportunities to support city resources with broad appeal and high utilization. The Novi Public Library is an excellent example of a city resource that serves everyone and that has embraced programming and services for all ages, cultures and interests. The city has a strong relationship with Library Director Julie Farkas and the library that I would like to see continue. Based on the results of the strategic planning retreat held by the library this spring, I would also like to give the community the chance to decide if additional funding can be provided to the library so that reduced hours and services might be avoided (<https://www.novilibrary.org/about-us/strategic-planning-2023/>).

Do you foresee any conflict of interest if you were appointed to serve as a Council

Member?

None

Is there anything else you would like City Council to be aware of, or know about you?