

From: postmaster@muniweb.com
Sent: Tuesday, November 28, 2023 11:06 PM
To: Hanson, Cortney; Morris, Melissa
Subject: The Form 'Boards and Commissions Application' was submitted

Name

Rachel Yamakura

Nickname, if preferred

Address*

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Are you a registered voter in the City of Novi?*

Yes

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

8-9 years

Employed by

Guidehouse (Veritas Management Group)

Educational Background*

Masters in Public Administration & Policy

Please describe your professional qualifications, skills and/or work experience, and how you would use these to benefit the boards and/or commissions for which you are applying.*

In my current capacity as the DEI & Health Equity Subject Matter Expert at Guidehouse, working with the CDC's Injury Center, my role has been to lead transformative, nationally impactful strategies with a global reach. My work focuses on setting health equity benchmarks and driving community engagement, illustrating my ability to craft targeted and comprehensive strategies. A significant aspect of my expertise is in ensuring accessibility, particularly adhering to Section 508, which is vital for making federal communications accessible to those with disabilities. This dedication to inclusive communication is augmented by my proficiency in community engagement and astute budget management. Throughout my career, I have been instrumental in establishing departments and spearheading initiatives with both regional and international significance. My collaborations with diverse stakeholders - including elected officials, business leaders, public health professionals, and educational institutions - have substantially enhanced alumni and student engagement, strengthening institutional connections. These partnerships have fostered unique, community-enriching programmatic experiences. My professional ethos is anchored in the conviction that true progress stems from intentionally and strategically embracing inclusivity and equity, leading to true belonging for individuals. At Lansing Community College, as the Director of Equity and Inclusion, I led Beyond the Book, a data-informed initiative promoting diverse perspectives across the campus. A key highlight was organizing a campus-wide event featuring author Isabel Wilkerson, which underscored my skill in engaging and uniting varied groups. I have a solid history of creating affinity programs that have supported the strategic objectives of various institutions. My efforts have bridged the gap between students and major corporations, facilitating internships and career opportunities. This has not only enhanced professional development but also established effective recruitment channels. My fundraising acumen has consistently yielded results that exceed targets, particularly in securing funds for equitable programming. I've been effective in forming transfer agreements between

community colleges and universities, especially with Minority Serving Institutions. These partnerships have led to notable improvements in student success and enhanced campus environments. My experience in managing Title IX violations and racial bias issues highlights my skills in conflict resolution and management turnaround strategies. My dedication to equity has been further demonstrated through my work with the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) and the Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD). There, I advocated for equitable school funding, achieving a significant increase in per-pupil funding for DPSCD and for students across Michigan. At SEMCOG, I played a crucial role in developing initiatives and influencing policies to close the digital divide, expand access to education, and workforce development to enhance the health of the region. In addition to my professional accomplishments, my engagement with the Novi community has been profound. As the co-president of the Orchard Hills PTO, I have actively contributed to the school community through impactful events, such as Science Night. My role as a trustee of the Novi Educational Foundation, serving on the Marketing and Fundraising committees, has allowed me to impact the broader community, benefiting students, families, and educators alike—most recently through our Giving Tuesday Campaign. As a prospective member of the City of Novi Library Board, I am enthusiastic about utilizing my comprehensive experience to advance the Library's strategic objectives. My primary aim is to reinforce and expand the Library's commitment to DEI, ensuring its thorough integration into every facet of the Library's functioning— from operations and financial management to policy formulation, developmental initiatives, and community engagement. In alignment with the Library's mission to support the educational, cultural, informational, and recreational needs of its diverse community, I plan to introduce and cultivate initiatives that promote learning, spark creativity, and foster an environment of inclusivity. My approach will be deeply rooted in the Library's core values, particularly focusing on creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are not just accepted but celebrated. Understanding the Library's vision to serve as a vital community hub for enrichment, exploration, and understanding, I am committed to reinforcing community focus through enhanced spaces, programs, and services. Collaboration will be a key element of my strategy, as I seek to forge partnerships that extend the Library's reach and effectiveness beyond its physical walls. Embracing innovation, I will work to ensure the Library evolves with the changing needs of the community, remaining open-minded and adaptable. With a commitment to learning and creativity, I aspire to empower community members to pursue their passions, fostering a spirit of adventure and wonder. This commitment also extends to the Library's focus areas, where I intend to address the alignment of funding and services, ensuring transparency about the gaps between service expectations and funding levels and exploring opportunities to align funding more closely with community needs and expectations. In terms of resources, services, and facilities, my goal is to optimize their quality and usability, ensuring they align with the community's needs. This includes making the community aware of these resources and improving internal communication processes to maintain service levels in line with available resources. Additionally, I recognize the importance of investing in and retaining library staff, as they are essential to the effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction of the services provided to meet current and future community needs. My varied personal and professional journey has endowed me with a deep understanding of global identities, empathy, and strategic leadership. This, coupled with my unwavering commitment to a people-first approach in all aspects of my work, positions me as an asset to the City of Novi's Public Library Board. I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to its continued growth and success.

Please list any community groups with which you are currently or have previously been active and describe your role.*

In my pursuit of advancing equity in education and societal contexts, I am deeply engaged with several key community organizations, playing pivotal roles in each: As the Co-President of Orchard Hills Elementary PTO, I lead critical initiatives, shaping the educational and community landscape of our school. In my role as a trustee of the Novi Educational Foundation, I actively contribute to the Marketing and Fundraising Committees, driving significant initiatives for the betterment of our educational community. My involvement with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights Council for Government and Education on Equity & Inclusion is particularly impactful. Here, I am at the forefront of safeguarding civil rights across Michigan and spearhead a subcommittee dedicated to developing a comprehensive DEI resource guide for school districts statewide. My role extends to being a panelist at the 2022 Civil Rights Summit, where I addressed pivotal issues in equity in education, and contributing significantly to the planning committee in 2023. Moreover, as a member of the FBI Multicultural Engagement Council, I provide crucial insights to the FBI on community relations and needs in Metro Detroit, influencing bureau practices on a large scale. In my previous roles, my impact was equally substantial. At the ACLU of Michigan, I led crucial training in citizen lobbying, focusing on Bail Reform and Legislative Advocacy, thereby impacting state-level policy discussions and culminating in a package of bipartisan bills being introduced. My mentoring work at Wayne State University Alumni Association, particularly in the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, involved guiding students towards achieving their full potential, academically and professionally. As the keynote speaker for El Nuevo Comienzo in 2022, I inspired a new generation of students. My involvement with the University of Michigan Alumni Association saw me driving important Minority Student Recruitment initiatives. In my role with BasBlue Detroit, as part of the community engagement committee, I contributed to empowering women and non-binary individuals in the Metro Detroit area, fostering a more inclusive community. My professional affiliations

are extensive and include the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE), Association of Latino Professionals for America (ALPFA), Detroit Young Professionals, National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE), National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and both the National and Michigan Diversity Councils. Each position I hold reflects a deep-seated commitment to creating inclusive, equitable communities and driving systemic change.

What motivated you to apply to serve on a board or commission, and why did you select the boards/commissions that you did?*

My aspiration to join the City of Novi Library Board is deeply rooted in my commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable communities, a guiding principle that has been central to both my professional and personal journey. The Library Board offers a distinctive platform to utilize my extensive expertise in strategic planning, organizational effectiveness, and change management, along with my profound experience in educational and community engagement, to contribute to a key community institution. The mission of the City of Novi Library, dedicated to addressing the diverse educational, cultural, informational, and recreational needs of the community, profoundly aligns with my professional ethos. My roles in public service and volunteer positions with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights Council, Orchard Hills Elementary PTO, and the Novi Educational Foundation have endowed me with vital skills and insights. These experiences have refined my capabilities in crafting strategic initiatives, fostering community engagement, and advocating for inclusive practices, all crucial for advancing the Library's mission. My choice to serve on the Library Board is a deliberate one, fueled by the ambition to be part of an entity that is foundational to community learning and engagement. Libraries, transcending their traditional role as book repositories, have evolved into dynamic centers for community interaction, learning, and creativity. My commitment to the Library Board is aligned with my dedication to educational equity and my resolve to enhance a resource that is both accessible and advantageous to every segment of our community. The Library's focus areas such as aligning funding and services, evolving resources, and investing in staff, resonate with areas where I can significantly contribute. Furthermore, the vision of the Library as a critical hub for enrichment, exploration, and understanding mirrors my professional trajectory and my goal to cultivate spaces that encourage lifelong learning, creativity, and inclusivity. My diverse experiences with community groups and professional affiliations have ideally positioned me to assume this role, allowing me to apply my strengths in strategic planning, community engagement, and DEI initiatives to augment the services and outreach of the Novi Library. In summary, my pursuit of a position on the Library Board is propelled by a fervent passion for public service, a steadfast commitment to the advancement of education and community, and a determination to ensure the Novi Library remains a welcoming, inclusive, and innovative hub for all.

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

If appointed to the City of Novi Library Board, my primary goal is to significantly contribute to the Library's mission of enriching the diverse educational, cultural, informational, and recreational needs of our community. Leveraging my extensive experience in strategic planning, DEI initiatives, and community engagement, I aim to further the Library as a vital hub of enrichment, exploration, and understanding. One of my key objectives is to deepen the Library's commitment to inclusivity for all members of the Novi community. This involves not only enhancing the inclusivity of the Library's resources and services but also ensuring that these offerings are effectively communicated and accessible to all segments of our community. I plan to advocate for and implement strategies that align the Library's funding and services with the evolving needs and expectations of the Novi community. This includes optimizing the quality and usability of Library resources and facilities, ensuring they are well-aligned with community needs and that the community is well-informed of these resources. I am particularly interested in fostering collaboration and community focus, exploring partnerships beyond the Library's walls to connect resources, services, and programs more effectively with the broader community. Innovation will be a cornerstone of my approach, embracing adaptability and open-mindedness to evolve with the changing needs of our patrons. Investing in the Library staff is another critical area of focus. I believe that the staff's effectiveness, efficiency, and job satisfaction are fundamental to meeting the current and future needs of the community. Thus, I intend to support initiatives that enhance staff development and retention. During my term, I am also eager to learn more about the specific challenges and opportunities faced by the Novi Library in its quest to serve as a community cornerstone. I am interested in understanding the nuanced dynamics between different community groups and the Library's services, as well as gaining deeper insights into the operational and strategic aspects of running a public library in today's rapidly changing landscape. Ultimately, I see my term on the Library Board as an opportunity to make a meaningful impact on the community's access to knowledge and resources, while also enriching my understanding of public service in the context of library science and community engagement. I am excited about the prospect of working collaboratively with fellow board members, library staff, and the community to achieve these goals.

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

Absolutely. Let me share a facet of my story that I believe deeply resonates with the essence of the City of Novi Library Board. My journey with libraries began in the hallowed halls of the Detroit Public Library on Woodward, where I spent countless hours as a child, accompanied by my parents and grandparents. These visits are among my earliest and most cherished memories, where the towering shelves and endless rows of books felt like a magical labyrinth of knowledge and adventure. The library was a place of wonder, sparking a lifelong love for learning and an appreciation for the sanctity of communal knowledge spaces. Currently, as I navigate the intricate and intellectually stimulating path of completing my PhD in Educational Leadership & Policy, I carry with me the sense of wonder and curiosity first kindled in those early library visits. My academic pursuit is not just a testament to my commitment to education and policy but also a continuous journey of discovery and growth, mirroring the endless corridors of the Detroit Public Library. My passion for exploration extends beyond academic realms; I am an ardent traveler, each journey an odyssey into diverse cultures and perspectives. These explorations have enriched my worldview, allowing me to weave a tapestry of global understanding into my professional and personal life. This love for exploration, ignited in the quiet corners of a library, now finds expression in my travels across continents. Moreover, my regular library visits with my family today are more than a tradition; they are a continuation of a legacy, a bridge connecting past and present. These visits are a constant reminder of the library's role as a sanctuary for imagination, learning, and community connection. As I aspire to serve on the City of Novi Library Board, I bring not just my academic insights and global experiences but also a heart filled with the whimsy and wonder of a childhood spent amidst books and stories. It is this blend of scholarly pursuit, worldly wisdom, and a childlike enchantment with the world of libraries that I am eager to contribute to the City of Novi Library Board, ensuring that it continues to be a beacon of learning, creativity, and community engagement.

Beautification Commission

Order of preference number

Beautification areas of expertise

BORDescription

Order of preference number

Board of Review areas of expertise

BldgAuth Description

Order of preference number

Building Authority areas of expertise

ConstBOA Description

Order of preference number

Construction Board of Appeals areas of expertise

CIA Description

Order of preference number

Corridor Improvement Authority areas of expertise

EDC Description

Order of preference number

Economic Development Corporation areas of expertise

EC Description

Order of preference number

Election Commission areas of expertise

HistCom Description

Order of Preference Number

Historical Comminssion Area of Expertise

HD Description

Order of preference number

Housing & Community Development Advisory areas of expertise

LibBoard Description

Order of preference number

Library Board areas of expertise

Policymaking/Review

Budget and Finance

Marketing/Public Relations

Customer Service

PRCS Description

Order of preference number

PRCS areas of expertise

PC Description

Order of preference number

Planning Commission areas of expertise

ZBA Description

Order of preference number

Zoning Board areas of expertise

AuthText**Signature/Date**

Rachel Yamakura 11.28.2023