

TONYA BURNS- FLINT CITY COUNCIL WARD 6 (NP)

Key findings include:

- **Current Role & Tenure:** Elected Nov. 2 2021, defeating Claudia Perkins 428–345 (55.37%–44.63%); serves as current Ward 6 incumbent in a four-year term (2021–2025)
- **Professional Background:** Flint entrepreneur, small-business owner, and longtime civic advocate profiled for neighborhood outreach and community leadership prior to office.
- **Political Alignment & Governance Focus:** Nonpartisan seat; Co-plaintiff (with the late Eric Mays) in the 2023 lawsuit challenging Mayor Sheldon Neeley’s ARPA advisory committee; the Michigan Court of Appeals ruled in July 2025 that the mayor’s panel violated the city charter, which Burns framed as a win for open government.
- **Democracy / Process Posture:** Consistently links accountability and transparency to residents’ democratic participation. Publicly condemned police conduct after June 2025 clashes at a council meeting and, with colleague Dennis Pfeiffer, called for a Michigan State Police investigation into alleged excessive force.
- **National Democracy Stance:** On Jan. 6 2021, criticized Donald Trump’s response to the Capitol attack as “despicable and beyond shameful,” aligning herself with pro-democracy norms. → [*Facebook Post*, Tonya Burns, 1/6/2021]
- **Council Conflict & Discipline:** *March 2024 Suspension:* Council voted 5–2 to suspend Burns for 30 days over “behavior unbecoming a council member.” Burns denounced the resolution as retaliatory and said, “Shame on them ... I’ll see you in court.” *April 2024 Lawsuit:* Filed suit against seven council members, arguing the suspension illegally disenfranchised Ward 6 voters and exceeded council authority. *2024 Recalls:* Four recall petitions filed citing censures and meeting absences; Genesee County Election Commission rejected all for unclear language.

Flint is the largest city and county seat of Genesee County (66 miles NW of Detroit). Population is 79.7k and the city is majority Black/African American, with relatively high poverty and low median household income compared with state benchmarks; 56% Black, 34% White (non-Hispanic), with small Latino and other communities (ACS) [[Census Reporter](#), accessed, 10/28/2025].

Using the Genesee County official canvasses, Flint voted overwhelmingly Democratic in both cycles 80% Democratic in 2020 (citywide result implied by summing all “City of Flint” precincts in the county’s 11/17/2020 canvass) and 77% Democratic in 2024 (from the 11/19/2024 canvass listing “City of Flint, Precinct 1–29”). In short: Flint remained a deep-blue anchor across both elections [[Genesee County](#), 11/17/2020] [[Genesee County](#), 11/19/2024].

BACKGROUND

Tonya Burns has served as Flint’s Ward 6 councilmember since winning the Nov. 2, 2021 election over Claudia Perkins 428–345 (55.37%–44.63%); she is the current incumbent listed on the city’s directory (four-year terms) [[Genesee County](#), accessed, 10/28/2025]. A Flint entrepreneur/advocate before office, she’s been profiled for long-standing community work and outreach [[Flint Courier News](#), 3/23/2021]. On democratic-process fights, she was a named plaintiff, along with the late Eric Mays in the 2023 suit arguing the mayor’s ARPA advisory committee violated the city charter; the Michigan Court of Appeals ruled against the mayor in July 2025, and Burns framed the outcome as a win for charter-compliant,

transparent oversight [[WNEM](#), 7/25/2025]. After clashes between police and attendees around early-June 2025 council proceedings, Burns publicly called alongside a colleague for a Michigan State Police investigation into alleged excessive force, linking accountability to residents' right to engage their government [[Michigan Public](#), 6/4/2025].

ON THE ISSUES

Response to Jan 6. riot

January 2021: Burns Called Trump's Response To Jan 6. Riot “Despicable And Beyond Shameful.”



Tonya Burns · Follow
January 6, 2021 · 🌐

President Obama has always exhibited Presidential behavior by remaining dignified and classy. The non- Presidential behavior that has been exhibited by #45 is despicable and beyond shameful.

CNN.COM
Obama says Capitol riots were 'incited by a sitting president'

17 reactions (likes, loves, wow) · 2 comments · 1 share

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[Facebook, Tonya Burns, 1/6/2021]

VULNERABILITIES & ADVERSE FINDINGS OF NOTE

30 suspension and lawsuit

March 2024: Flint City Council Voted 5-2 To Suspend Burns For 30 Days Over Meeting Conduct. “Flint City Council members voted 5-2 to suspend Councilwoman Tonya Burns for 30 days and censure Councilman Dennis Pfeiffer during a City Council meeting on Monday, March 25, 2024. Council President Ladel Lewis, Vice President Candice Mushatt, Councilmembers Eva Worthing, Quincy Murphy, and Judy Priestley voted in favor of Burns’ suspension. Help us empower, impact, and inform our community. Support us today and help us go further, faster. Councilmembers Jerri Winfrey-Carter and Pfeiffer opposed the suspension, while newly elected 1st Ward Councilman Leon El-Alamin and Burns abstained. ‘I abstain because this is ridiculous, this is riddled full of lies and if you’re going to put a resolution it should be truthful, and it’s not,’ Burns said. ‘Shame on them who voted on it, and I’ll see you in court.’ Flint City Council members Jerri Winfrey-Carter (left) and Tonya Burns (right) listen to

public comments during a meeting in the Dome Auditorium in Flint City Hall on Monday, July 31, 2023. When the council discussed censuring Pfeiffer, Pfeiffer said he would not support the move until the rules were “equally applied” to the entire council. ‘If you guys vote for it, have at it,’ said Pfeiffer. ‘But until the rules are applied equally, this won’t have my vote. If the rules were applied equally I would vote to censure myself, but they’re not.’ Worthing said she would vote in favor of the censure and cited several instances in the past when Pfeiffer insulted her. Winfrey-Carter said she would not support Pfeiffer’s censure. “There’s several councilmembers up here that should be getting censures for behavior that’s unbecoming of a councilperson,” she said. ‘It’s a double standard. I hope the residents of the City of Flint, I hope you guys see what’s happening on this council.’ Before the vote, Mushatt introduced two resolutions: suspending Burns for “behavior unbecoming of a council member” and censuring Pfeiffer. The resolution language was not made available to the public. Burns and Pfeiffer objected to the resolutions, arguing that they weren’t provided copies of the resolutions ahead of time. Mushatt said she was given the resolutions just before she took her seat for the meeting. Pfeiffer said the resolutions were ‘absolute retribution’ and a ‘double standard’ because Lewis also exhibited behavior unbecoming of a councilperson at recent meetings. ‘You are an agent of chaos. You abuse your position and your power, and you have made it a normal routine to weaponize the police against the residents,’ Burns said of Lewis. ‘You rule like a tyrant and a dictator.’ As Burns was escorted from the meeting by an officer from the Flint Police Department, she repeated that she would ‘see them in court.’” [[Flint Beat](#), 3/26/2024]

April 2024: Burns Sued Seven Council Members And Argued That The Suspension

Disenfranchised Ward 6 Voters. “Sixth Ward Flint City Councilwoman Tonya Burns filed a lawsuit against her fellow council members on April 10, 2024, in Genesee County’s 7th Circuit Court after they voted to suspend her from council. Burns’ attorney, Terry L. Johnson, told Flint Beat on April 15, 2024, that Burns filed the lawsuit against Flint City Council due to their “egregious actions of removing her from her elected seat. ‘It’s our position that the Flint City Council does not have the authority or the power to remove an elected official,’ Johnson said. “This action ... has disenfranchised the residents of the 6th district. They have no representation, no vote, and no voice to be heard because of the illegal actions of the Flint City Council.” [[Flint Beat](#), 4/15/2024]

2024 recall filings

2024: Four Recall Petition Languages Were Filed Against Burns, Genesee County’s Election Commission Rejected The Language.

“The Genesee County Election Commission has rejected four recall language petitions against city of Flint council member Tonya Burns. Two sets of petition language said that Burns was previously censured at two separate meetings for behavior unbecoming of a council member. The other two sets stated that Burns refused to attend three special meetings in October and November.” [[WNEM](#), 12/11/2024]

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