

Christy McDonald: [13:44:14:22] We want to welcome Dr. Jim Hines, Republican candidate for Michigan Governor. Thanks so much for taking part in our gubernatorial candidate interviews. I’m Christy McDonald with Detroit Public Television. In the room today, and doing the questioning, are members of the Detroit Journalism Cooperative. The DJC is made up of six media outlets: Detroit Public Television, Bridge Magazine, Michigan Radio, WDET Radio, New Michigan Media, and Chalkbeat Detroit.

We’d like to thank the John S. & James L. Knight Foundation for its support on this project. Today’s panel includes, and we’ll start over here to my left, Erin Einhorn. She is the bureau chief of Chalkbeat Detroit. Riley Beggin, she’s the politics reporter for Bridge Magazine. Stephen Carmody, he’s a reporter and producer at Michigan Radio. Hassan Khalifeh, he’s a reporter with the Arab American News and New Michigan Media, and to my left, Sandra Svoboda with WDET Radio.

So for the next hour, each journalist will ask a series of questions and follow up on your answers if they need some more specifics. We do appreciate you keeping your answers concise so we can get to as many topics as possible. I will give us a 30-minute time reminder so we can all keep track of where we are in the hour. So let’s go ahead and get started.

I’m going to start off with the first question and really take a look at leadership and responsibility. Much has been made of the management style of previous governors, a de facto head of the party with strong armed tactics of getting things done to our current governor who’s been criticized for not being as politically savvy as he needed to be. First of all, explain what your management and leadership style is.

Jim Hines: [13:45:51:24] My management is to get things done and to utilize a team approach, so that has been my habit both international with my international work and my national work, including as a physician. That is bringing people together that are experts in whatever area that we have to solve, whatever problem, and come up with a solution. That involves intimately knowing the people that I’m working with, their strengths, their weaknesses, and what specific interests they have in whatever the topic of discussion is.


Jim Hines: [13:46:27:21] I think compromise is a word that is utilized a lot, and it’s feared by many because what it means is taking your beliefs and your thoughts and meshing them with somebody else. But when you’re on a board,
you have to forget the politics and you have to figure out what the problem is and what the best way of solving that problem is. It’s not just what you think, but it’s what the group comes up with to get something done. You have to get something done. And so, if you’re obstinate and you insist on your specific way—it has to be my way or the highway—that’s not going to work.

Christy McDonald:  
[13:47:08:27] How do you see your role if you become governor? Do you see yourself as the de facto head of the Republican Party, and would you be in lockstep of whatever the Republican agenda would be in the state of Michigan?

Jim Hines:  
[13:47:17:15] I think the role of the governor is to serve the people of the state, so that’s all 10 million people. That’s not a Republican Party or a Democrat Party or any other special interest group. It’s one of the reasons I’m not taking a penny of special interest money. I don’t want to owe anybody, and I believe the governor has to work for the people.

Christy McDonald:  
[13:47:37:19] Would that put you in a clash with Republican leaders who say, “Look. We want to get this done, and now you’re in the governor’s office. And you’re in the position to do that, and you need support from Republicans in the House and in the Senate to do it”?

Jim Hines:  
[13:47:47:27] I might not be very popular from either side. I think the focus has to be on the people of the state and what the problem is and what the best solution is for that particular time and for that group of people.

Christy McDonald:  
[13:48:02:05] Okay. Let’s go ahead and take a look at another topic that many people around the state are talking about: education. You said it’s one of the top three things that people have on their mind when they come up and talk to you at all the places that you’re visiting around the state. And I’m going to go over to Erin Einhorn for our first questions about education.

Erin Einhorn:  
[13:48:17:23] We heard from several people in our audience who ask questions about education. Judith specifically wanted to know what your plans are for schools. Do you believe that schools in Michigan have the resources that they need to succeed to serve all students, including those with special needs? And do you think that our schools are funded equitably?

Jim Hines:  

Erin Einhorn:  
[13:48:43:00] It is a lot of questions. Sorry about that.

Jim Hines:  
[13:48:44:19] I think we’re in trouble education-wise in this state. We have way too many kids who can’t read, way too many kids that are not prepared for college. We’ve pushed our kids to college until it’s sickening. And it’s not just counselors and educators that have done that, but it’s been parents thinking that they want the best for their child and so that means go to
college. And when they say, “Well, you know, I don’t know what to study,” the parent or the counselor will say, “Well, you’ll figure it out when you’re there.”

That increases the length of time in college. When you’re not prepared, that increases the amount of remedial education that you need. We know 50% of those who start in a college pathway don’t graduate by six years, so it’s an issue. I believe that we need to go back to the basics when it comes to education: reading, writing, arithmetic, and I would add character building. I believe that school choice is important, and local control is important.

I would get rid of common core in this whole scenario that we’re talking about. I believe the we need coaches, reading coaches, in the classroom. We’re in trouble in reading and in math, and I believe that reading coaches would be very helpful so that anybody in this room could go in and sit with a child and read one on one or one on two. That’s not going to be enough, though.

Erin Einhorn: [13:50:09:29] Do the schools have the resources they need and are they funded equitably? That was the question.

Jim Hines: [13:50:16:13] The question of funding—the problem that we have can’t be solved by money. If we look at the last seven years, we’ve had an extra $1.8 billion pumped into education, and our reading scores are worse than they were before. So money is not the solution. Although, in the educational part that we’re talking about, I believe we do need more funding, particularly for training teachers in how kids learn to read and looking at the variety of means that kids learn to read.

I like phonics because I learned with phonics. I’ve done a lot of international work. I’m fluent in a number of languages, and in each of those languages, we use phonics to learn the language. So that’s critically important. Teachers, they need that education, and most teachers do not learn how kids read. So the funding particularly is important.

There are school districts, especially when you look at the upper part of Michigan, that are not funded adequately. There’s a gap, and that gap needs to be narrowed as quickly as possible and as much as possible.

Erin Einhorn: [13:51:28:28] Okay. Given that the test scores are often driven by socio-economic and other factors, do you think that the state’s current accountability system of measuring schools gives parents a fair and accurate measure of how our schools are doing?

Jim Hines: [13:51:44:11] I don’t think so. I think there’s a lot of confusion. Parents don’t really understand the quality of education that their child is getting at a particular school. So I believe that parents need to be involved. I don’t think
and A through F system is going to do that. I think that parents have to actually know what’s being taught in a classroom and know who the teacher is and know what’s being taught.

In addition to that, we know--I have seven sons. They all learn in different manners, and my patients, as they talk to me, there will be a mom that will have three children in three different schools. I’ll ask why, and they’ll say, “Because Joey learns this way, so this charter school is best for him. But this traditional public school is best for this one, and this one I’m home schooling.” I see many parents choosing a variety of means of teaching their kids.

We don’t want to trap kids in one school system because one school system or one school might not fit all the kids that a family might have access to. I think school choice is critically important if we want to get the education for our kids that’s necessary. And that takes into account social economics, dyslexia, a number of other learning disabilities, where English is not the first language, those all have to be taken into account.

Erin Einhorn: [13:53:13:05] Should the state be involved in deciding when a school should be closed for poor performance?

Jim Hines: [13:53:20:21] The state probably should be somewhat involved, but I think local control and school boards and parents should be involved in knowing how a school’s doing education-wise, how a teacher’s doing. So I would like to see a local municipality taking control of that and the state perhaps a supervisory role.

Christy McDonald: [13:53:44:26] Steve, you want to go ahead and jump in with your question on Detroit community schools?

Stephen Carmody: [13:53:47:26] Yes. Detroit public schools, the largest school district in the state, recently released a facilities review report that found it will cost $500 million to upgrade school facilities to bring them up to current standards, but the state won’t let the district borrow money for renovations. What help, if any, should come from Lansing for this problem?

Jim Hines: [13:54:11:00] When you look at the Detroit school system, I look at more than just traditional public schools, but also the charter school system. And it’s a complicated issue because half of the students in Detroit attend charter schools, and that half that came from the traditional public school system have vacated those schools and taken their state money with them. So now you have large facilities that are not vacant but the enrollment is very low.

They have leaky roofs and so forth, so I think that municipalities need to figure out how they’re going to work with charter schools to be the best that they can be. What we see in the private sector is that when you have two
businesses and they’re competing, they get better. It gets cheaper. I have not seen that happen in the traditional public school system. It needs to happen.

I believe that traditional public schools have a lot to offer. In fact, four of my kids attended a traditional public school at the same time they were attending a parochial school. So they went to the traditional school for certain subjects that weren’t offered at a parochial school. I think the traditional public schools have a tremendous amount to offer, not just in the languages but in the sciences, physics and chemistry and sports and band and art and so forth, which are not offered in many charter schools or even parochial schools.

So there’s a lot to offer, but I don’t believe that Detroit public schools can maintain their large structure that they had before charter schools came into existence. What part should Lansing have in that? A supervisory role. I think that the majority of it should come from Detroit. How can we solve this issue? How can we become leaner, meaner, better teachers? After all, it’s the parents who take their students away from the traditional public schools to other school systems.

Stephen Carmody: [13:56:16:24] The question was about upgrading facilities, not whether traditional public schools or charter schools are better. To improve the quality in the traditional schools, we have to do something about the buildings, which are in bad shape. Should Lansing contribute at least something towards the physical upkeep of these buildings?

Jim Hines: [13:56:38:21] I wouldn’t be opposed if Lansing made a small contribution, but it’s not going to be a large enough contribution to revamp a crumbling infrastructure of the school system in Detroit. They’re going to have to figure that out on their own, whether it’s private sector dollars, whether it’s federal dollars, those types of things.

Christy McDonald: [13:56:59:29] I want to follow up on something that you said when you were speaking to Erin talking about how money doesn’t solve everything when it comes it educational funding but that you would put more money into teacher training. And you would put more money into literacy programs. If voters hear that, they say, “Where is that money going to come from, and where do you think you’d get the dollars allocated from?”

Jim Hines: [13:57:19:09] I think the dollars are already there. Again, $1.8 billion, in addition, has gone to the school systems in the last seven years with very little to show for it. If you look at the pre-school and the early education of kids, millions of dollars have been pumped into that system, and the kids’ scores are even lower than they were at the beginning.

So I don’t think the money is the answer. I think that when we talk about bringing coaches in, those are voluntary individuals. Those are grandpas and grandmas and moms and dads that are considered. The education for those
teachers is going to be available through the regular funding process for teacher education.


Hassan Khalifeh: [13:58:13:03] Yeah. You already touched on the need for choice in the education system, but I wonder what you think about the need for reform in how charter schools are governed or funded.

Jim Hines: [13:58:24:22] When you look at charter schools, and I’ve been in half a dozen charter schools looking at curriculum and meeting with teachers and so forth. I like charter schools as an option. It’s an option that parents have. I think it’s a good option. Should they be more supervised than they area? I think that rests to be determined.

Should charter schools be allowed to be profitable? Why not? If a school can do what they need to do and still be profitable at the same time and educate the children, I see no reason that they should be profitable.

Hassan Khalifeh: [13:59:01:12] Should money allocated for public schools be used to also fund charter schools?

Jim Hines: [13:59:05:20] Well, of course, charter schools are public schools, so the dollars follow the child. When the child goes from a traditional public school to a charter school or vice versa, the money follows. The answer to that is yes.

Christy McDonald: [13:59:19:07] Let me ask you about something you said about common core. You said that we should get rid of the common core. Why?

Jim Hines: [13:59:26:06] As I’ve spoken to dozens and dozens of teachers and parents, what we see is we see teachers spending a lot of time, if not a majority of the time, teaching to the test. When you do that, that doesn’t prepare kids for other subjects that need to be taught. Teachers are complaining, and severely, that their students are not learning—they feel are not learning what needs to be taught, as a teacher in their opinion, what needs to be taught because they’re teaching to the test.

And a second complaint is that everybody kind of ends up learning a certain body of information, and those that are talented and could excel don’t excel. Those that are at the bottom, it may bring them up, but it doesn’t allow those students that would normally excel to excel.

Christy McDonald: [14:00:20:02] Erin?

Erin Einhorn: [14:00:22:12] What can the state do about the high cost of child care and the lack of pre-school options for young children?
Jim Hines: [14:00:30: 04] That’s a huge problem, and, frankly, I don’t know the solution to that. You have moms who would like to work but can’t work because they have children. In many situations, it’s Grandpa and Grandma that watch those kids so that Mom can work, Mom can get an education, so that works very well. I think that when you discuss--well, let’s set up a daycare center that the state is going to fund, I’m hesitant to start something like that.

If the private sector would like to do that, I think that’s great. I know of a number of families where they take their kids to a parent’s home, and the moms or the dads go and work. And then they come home, so you have communities that come together to deal with that situation. But I think having the state fund something for parents to watch their kids so that they can go to work is probably not viable.

Erin Einhorn: [14:01:32:16] So you don’t think the state should be subsidizing child care or funding pre-school in any way?

Jim Hines: [14:01:37:24] I don’t think so.

Erin Einhorn: [14:01:39:11] So you would end all of those programs as well?

Jim Hines: [14:01:40:18] I would consider ending those programs.

Christy McDonald: [14:01:45:02] I want to ask you a little about governance structure. There’s been a lot of talk about the way that education is shepherded in the state with the state elected school board, and then the school board appoints the superintendent. And then the governor’s office doesn’t have a whole lot to do with it. It’s a different governance model than a lot of other states that are more successful at their education around the country.

Would you change the governance structure of the Michigan Department of Education should you become governor?

Jim Hines: [14:02:11:01] I would be in favor of the governor being in charge of the board of education and have oversight.

Christy McDonald: [14:02:19:02] Okay. Sandy.

Sandra Svoboda: [14:02:19:22] Yeah. I want to talk a little bit about higher education. Costs have, of course, gone up in the state. I’m wondering if you think that the costs of colleges and universities now are prohibitive and what you would do as governor, what you could do as governor, to find some relief from that.

Jim Hines: [14:02:34:11] I think the costs are huge. It’s large. It’s burdensome. There are many things that families can do to reduce those costs, and I think duel enrollment is a key. I had two of my sons who did duel enrollment. One
started at Michigan as a junior. The other one started at Cedarville, in Ohio, as a sophomore.

I think that that is a huge thing that can be done. I think a second thing that’s very important is to make sure that kids are ready for college so that they can read, they can write, they can do math so that they’re not having to take remedial classes and extend the period of time that they’re at the university. I think that’s critically important. Another aspect is that kids need to know what they want to study.

We need to change this idea that “Oh, you’ll go to college and there you’ll learn what you want to study.” That leads to multiple major changes, so they’re changing from one major to another to another and extending their time in college to six years or seven years or not graduating. Then, of course, there’s a whole group of individuals that are pushed to college that would really be great in the vocational trades.

Sandra Svoboda: [14:03:49:06] What about the universities themselves? You talk about the student side of things. What about the university administrations and the state?

Jim Hines: [14:03:56:25] I think that schools can cut costs. It’s interesting that it seems as though the higher the tuition, the more students you have applying to go to that school. Somehow, the higher the tuition, the better the school, and that’s not necessarily at all true. Computer education, I think, is important. What schools can do to cut down costs--I think to encourage freshman to know what they want to study when they’re there and to promote summer school, to promote graduating in three years rather than four years.

I think community colleges are a great way for us to have a decrease in cost of higher education because it’s so much cheaper at a community college. It allows students to figure out what they want to do and to take a bunch of different classes that are a third of the cost of a regular college or university. So that cuts costs.

Christy McDonald: [14:04:54:04] Before we leave the topic of education, Dr. Hines, how would you rank Michigan’s education system in terms of some of the issues that we have here? Also, in terms of how you would attack it when you become governor? How high a priority is changing what we’re doing with our education K-12 system?

Jim Hines: [14:05:13:23] I think it’s a huge priority. We have kids going to college that you find out really don’t want a college education or don’t need a college education. That’s very important that we send kids to college that need and want to go to college, that have an idea of what they want to study, and stop sending kids to college just because that’s the thing to do. That will mean changing the thinking of parents, counselors, schools.
I think that we need to realize that the university is to prepare young people for a profession, for either advanced studies, graduate studies, or whatever they choose to do, and then to offer majors that are going to be significant that you can get a job in. So this goes to your question a little bit, too. And that is having a third of your majors be in subjects that we don’t need in the workforce.

I think that’s a very important thing that has to be looked at, and children, kids, and moms and dads need to understand that if you get a major in this particular thing, there is a flood of applicants working towards that. When you get out, you might not have a job. I think a good example is ultra-stenography, the ability to do an ultra sound and to look inside someone.

There’s a glut in the market, and so if someone comes to me wanting to know “Dr. Hines, what do you think about ultra sound versus x-ray versus CAT scans versus MRIs?” I have that ability to say, “Well, I wouldn’t do ultrasound because for every opening there’s ten individuals that can’t find a job.” I think schools partnering with the work force to know what jobs are out there is beneficial in this area.

Sandra Svoboda: [14:07:07:18] I’m interested in what majors don’t have a link to jobs? Which ones would you have colleges eliminate? And you can’t say journalism.

Jim Hines: [14:07:15:00] I can’t say journalism? No? I think that when you go out into the work force and you talk to individuals, over and over again, you have individuals say “I majored in math,” for example, or “I majored in chemistry. And I’m not doing math or chemistry at all.” I’ll ask “Well, did it prepare you for the job that you’re doing?” They’ll say, “Well, no.”

What they didn’t realize is that if you want to be a math major and have a significant job and you’re not a teacher, you’re going to end up going all the way to the point where you get a PhD. Well, a PhD in mathematics pays how much versus what you’re making now? So those discussions are intimate discussions, one on one, that you have with individuals. Even a topic like math or chemistry for an individual, you may not be able to get a job in.

Sandra Svoboda: [14:08:15:11] So we should eliminate math majors?


Sandra Svoboda: [14:08:17:25] Well, what subjects should we eliminate? If they’re not leading directly to jobs, if you’re looking at the course catalog at a university, what are you cutting out of it?

Jim Hines: [14:08:26:19] You know, I’d have to look at it. I don’t have an answer to that.


Christy McDonald: [14:08:34:28] All right. Let’s move on. Before we turn to some more policy specific questions, I want to ask a little bit about the workings in Lansing. Michigan’s term limit will cause a mass turnover in this year in the Senate, especially the house. How challenging do you think the loss of institutional knowledge will be in Lansing, and as governor, how will you and your staff prepare to work with new law makers?

Jim Hines: [14:08:54:19] Well, potentially, it could be a big issue, and I think mentoring is important. That happens in our legislature, and it happens in every institution, mentoring. Someone needs to have a historical perspective of what’s happened and what’s not happened. That’s where it’s important to bring people around you that have that historical perspective that can say, “Well, remember what happened in 1964, what happened in 1965.”

Term limits are interesting. Should they be expanded and changed in the state of Michigan? I believe so. I think they’re too short, so I would recommend that we change them, perhaps do 12 or 14 years in the senate or 12 years in the house. And pick one or the other and actually dig your heels in and learn the material that needs to be learned in those areas while you’re in Lansing.


Riley Beggin: [14:09:57:00] Anyone who drives Michigan’s roads knows that they’re bad. A task force says that the state needs $4 billion more just to maintain our state’s infrastructure. How should Michigan pay to fix roads, bridges and other water infrastructure?

Jim Hines: [14:10:13:09] That’s kind of a loaded question. If we look at just roads, they’re horrendous. They’re terrible. You can’t even read a book anymore while you’re driving—well, not while you’re driving, but while you’re riding down the road. I believe it’s possible to fix the roads without increasing the taxes, first of all. I’ll say that. I believe that every dollar designated to roads needs to be used for roads.

Lapse funds, monies left over from prior years, need to be used for roads, and any extra money in the general fund needs to be used for roads. The 2015 road package, when it’s fully implemented, is $1.2 billion. That’s 2021. It was thought that that would be enough. I don’t know. As I drive and I looked at that report, it’s difficult to imagine that that’s going to be enough to get our roads to the point where they’re in fair to good condition.
I would propose that we take some of our income tax, 0.35% to be exact, $875 million, for two consecutive years and concentrate that money on cities, towns, and counties, not the trunk lines, but the counties, and try to get roads to the point where they’re in pretty good shape. I think that if we can do that and use material that will last a long time--when I was in France for a year, they are similar on latitude, similar weather conditions and salt conditions. Their roads do last a long time, and they use a different kind of material.

It costs maybe 10 to 15% more than what we pay here, but the roads last four times as long. So we need to have a good quality material that lasts for a long time that needs less maintenance. In addition to that, we need to fix our potholes, not when they’re huge. But like when a dentist fixes a cavity, they don’t want a big cavity. They want a little one.

They don’t just plop in the stuff. They clean it out, coat it, put the right stuff in, pack it down. It’s even with the tooth. That’s how we need to fix our roads when our potholes are small. That will extend the life of roads. When we look at water, the governor’s proposed what I will call a user fee for the water pipelines of a dollar per year, up to $5 per year, and that would raise about $110 million.

I think that’s a reasonable thing to do. The pipes that we’re talking about replacing belong to the home owner, and we’re helping them collect that money to actually go to do waterline, either lead or galvanized pipe replacement, $110 million. Lansing took 12 years to do all their pipelines, and that was about $44 million. So it’s expensive, but it has to be done. That would be a means to do that.

Another, I think, critical issue that’s related to this are the toxic sites that we have here in Michigan. I can address that later or now if you’d like.

Riley Beggin: [14:13:15:21] I think we’ll ask you more about PFOS later on. I do want to follow up on talking about funding for roads. You said 0.35% of income tax will be used to fix the roads under your plan. Where are you expecting to make cuts in the rest of the budget from that general revenue source?

Jim Hines: [14:13:34:10] That would be additional funding. So when you look at individuals and what they’re proposing, they’ll say “Oh, we need to get rid of our personal income tax. We need to go back to the pre-Grant Holm days of 3.9.” So the 0.35 actually comes from the 4.25 minus the 0.25, which gets us the 3.9 on the income tax. So the question is where does that money come from? That would come from the over $50 billion budget that we have.

Riley Beggin: [14:14:04:16] So you’re saying role back to pre-Grant Holm area income tax, but I’m confused. That amount of money that’s left over you’re going to use for roads?
Jim Hines: [14:14:14:21] So that amount of money coming in would be $875 million, so I’m suggesting that we use that for two years in a row. That’s $1.75 billion added to the $1.2 billion plus what we get back from federal and state. That’s about $5.7 billion per year, for two years, to get our roads in reasonably good shape and then deal with the personal income tax.

Riley Beggin: [14:14:45:26] I see. Okay.


Christy McDonald: [14:14:50:10] Riley, did you want to follow up on a question on Flint?

Riley Beggin: [14:14:53:00] Yes. As the recovery efforts continue in Flint, what have you learned from the situation there, and how would that inform what you do as governor?

Jim Hines: [14:15:00:25] Well, my understanding of Flint actually comes from patients that live in Flint that travel to Saginaw for their healthcare because they no longer trust the healthcare system and what they’re hearing from Lansing there in Flint. So what happened is tragic. I would call it a poisoning, in a sense, because of the high lead levels that moms received when they were pregnant and little kids and so forth.

It’s a tragic thing that’s happened, and I believe holding people accountable is great. But there’s been very little shown in the prosecution and defense of what’s happened in Flint. We spent over $23 million doing that, and that’s money that could have been used--that’s tax payer money that could have been used for roads. That is a huge issue.

I think the other is that we know that as long as there’s any lines that need to be changed out that there is always the possibility of a bolus of lead contaminated water getting in the water system and contaminating other individuals, other homes. It just seems a little crazy to me that we would tell the people of Flint that you have to drink bottled water until all the lines are out. However, then we take the bottled water away. I think there’s a conflict there that needs to be resolved.

Christy McDonald: [14:16:29:05] Let me go back to something that you said, that there has been $23 million spent in the investigation and the prosecution following the Flint Water Crisis. Are you saying that that prosecution and investigation should not have happened, that we should have not spent that money to find out and to backtrack what may have happened?

Jim Hines: [14:16:45:00] No, I’m saying that it’s great to hold people accountable, but we actually have very little to show for--it’s way over $23 million. We need to change out the waterlines. I think that the key is here not so much the fact that we’re prosecuting and defending everybody in Flint. But while we’re...
doing that, the waterlines are not changed out. My emphasis would be on getting the waterlines changed.

Christy McDonald: [14:17:12:11] Anyone else have a follow up on that? I have one quick follow up in terms of trust because people in Flint do not trust what the state government is telling them. A lot of them still don’t have that trust. How would you seek to rebuild people’s trust in state government?

Jim Hines: [14:17:29:19] I think you have to acknowledge when you’ve messed up. That’s the bottom line. I drilled wells in Africa, and when the water came out stinky and brown, I didn’t try to convince people the water was okay to drink. That’s what happened from Lansing. I appreciate Governor Snyder. He was the leader. He took all the responsibility for what happened, but he isn’t the only one that knew the water was bad, not by a long stretch.

So the focus has been on Governor Snyder. He messed up. He’s done really well in other areas, but he messed up here. It really wasn’t just him. It was other people. Trust comes over time of being consistent with your message and actually showing that you love the people there, that you really care for them, and you understand the trauma, almost like a post-traumatic stress disorder.

You understand the trauma that’s been caused when you’ve told someone that everything is okay, and then they find out that it’s not okay and that you knew it wasn’t okay for such a long period of time. It will take years for people to forgive, to forget, and to recover from what happened in Flint.

Christy McDonald: [14:18:45:13] All right. Let’s talk a little bit about some more water quality issues. Steve?

Stephen Carmody: [14:18:48:14] Not surprisingly, a lot of people in our audience are very concerned about water quality, in particular, about the Great Lakes. We have a question from Laurie, and she asks basically, what are you going to do to safeguard them, our Great Lakes, as governor?

Jim Hines: [14:19:05:09] There’s no question that they’re being threatened, whether it’s invasive carp, and that will take a multi-state approach. Actually, acknowledging that there’s a problem and then dealing with it, looking at it with other states. When you look at the 23 million gallons of oil that we’re pumping through the Straights in a pipeline that’s 65 years old that has dents in it, that’s bent, that doesn’t have the supports, it’s just a time bomb. And it will break just like the Kalamazoo line broke.

And we don’t know when, whether it will be winter or summer and the implications that are involved in that. It would be tragic if it broke, and one of the first things I would do as governor would be to decommission Line 5 because of the concern and fear. Again, that comes from my work with
pipelines, and so forth, in Africa and the fact that a very similar pipeline in Kalamazoo broke and there have been other leaks.

The Great Lakes are just precious, so I think the first thing we have to decide is “Yes, we’re going to decommission it.” How are we going to transport oil and so forth? That’s the second question. But the first question is how do we protect the Great Lakes and, in turn, protect the citizens of the state. A third issue would be sewage leakage. We leak billions of raw sewage and partially treated sewage into our Great Lakes every year.

That has to be dealt with, not ignored. It closes beaches. It interferes with tourism. It keeps people from coming to the state of Michigan. As I travel the states, it’s very common for someone to make a joke about “Pure Michigan.” “Why would I come to Michigan? It’s called pure because the water is bad. The roads are terrible. You’re going to poison me with the water and beat up my car. What kind of joke is that?” So it has to be dealt with, and we have the technology to do. We just need to do it.

Riley Beggin: [14:21:17:00] You kind of touched on what my question was which was your plans for the future of Line 5. Let’s talk about how you would transport that oil. Do you think that that’s an important resource, and, if so, what would you do instead of Line 5?

Jim Hines: [14:21:32:27] I think it’s an important resource. Believe it or not, it’s very difficult to find out how important, so it depends who you talk to. I believe it’s important. I believe that transporting by truck or railroad cars is more dangerous than actually a pipeline. It’s been proposed that we build a tunnel. There was a feasibility study done so that you could walk alongside it and check it.

I think that that’s a reasonable suggest, but that will take years and years to produce. The question is do we actually stop the flow of oil and figure out where the oil is going to come from other pipelines for the state of Michigan and have an honest evaluation of what are our needs? There are two natural gas plants going in the UP. Does that meet the needs that we have? That would have to be looked at, but I would decommission the line.

Riley Beggin: [14:22:30:14] Are there any other energy resources that you’d be interested in investing in as governor?

Jim Hines: [14:22:35:23] I love green energy, so solar and wind. When I was in Africa, I solarized two hospitals. I solarized our house. We lived in a solar house, and we solarized six of our 20 dispensaries because we need snake anti-venom. I like solar. I grew up on a farm that used the windmill to pump water, so those are great resources that we need to take advantage of. Whether we should mandate and subsidize, that’s a separate question, but my overall thoughts on
green energy and minimizing the use of fossil fuels is that if we can do it, let’s do it.

Christy McDonald: [14:23:16:13] Hassan?

Hassan Khalifeh: [14:23:16:22] Yeah. I just wanted to follow up on if you do have any plans to clean up the water contamination caused by industrial chemicals like PFOS?

Jim Hines: [14:23:26:22] Absolutely. There are over 7,000 toxic sites across the state. 3,000 of those are orphan sites where we don’t know those responsible for the leakage or are no longer there. Those sites, many of them, are potentially leaking contaminants into our groundwater system, which then leads to our rivers and lakes. This has to be dealt with and not just ignored. It has to be at the top of the list. We have to deal with it. The question always is well, what about funding?

And I think two parts on that. One is we have tried in the last ten years, and longer, to clean up those sites, but it’s interesting if you look at the accountability part of that. A lot of that money was used for parks and walkways and tennis courts and swimming pools, so it wasn’t all used for toxic clean-up. I’m talking about using the money for what it’s designated for. I would look at tipping fees. This is the cost that we charge for people to dump trash in Michigan.

We’re an international dumping site, international. When we look at the trash that’s dumped in Michigan, there are states that are trucking it in 100 miles because we’re only $0.36 a ton. Wisconsin’s $13 a ton. We’re not in sync with the states around us, and so we’re like a magnet attracting trash to the state of Michigan. We really don’t need other people’s dirty diapers and banana peels and coffee grounds and things like that. We just don’t need them.

I believe that we should increase our tipping fee so that it matches, or is similar to, the states that are around us so that we’re not that magnet. The funds that we get from the trash that’s dumped here, I believe, could be used for these toxic sites. It’s been shown, easily, 79, $80 million could be garnished that we could use to clean up the sites.

Christy McDonald: [14:25:28:09] All right. We’re going to move on and explore the topic of immigration. Hassan has a couple of questions. Go ahead.

Hassan Khalifeh: [14:25:33:17] Yeah. Governor Snyder established the Michigan office of New Americans in 2014 and declared June as immigrant heritage month this year. What would you do to attract more people to Michigan, given that we might lose a congressional seat given the population decline? And would refugees be a part of that plan?
Jim Hines: [14:25:53:26] Well, first of all, let me start by saying we all were immigrants. We’re now Americans. Each one in this room, your heritage is that of an immigrant, but you’re no longer an immigrant. You’re an American. I’m a strong proponent for immigration and for refugees. I think that they need to be strongly vetted. We need to know that they’re not coming to harm us. They need to come in legally, but I think it’s a great avenue to increase the population and entrepreneurship.

If you look at entrepreneurship and jobs, a high percentage of that comes from immigrants and refugees, very industrious peoples form all over the world. So we should foster that. We should encourage that. They can become active citizens of Michigan and Americans. We, of course, want them to learn our history and our language and assimilate into our culture. That’s all part of it, but I think it’s important and it needs to be done.

Hassan Khalifeh: [14:26:52:14] Do you believe that refugees are properly vetted, currently?

Jim Hines: [14:26:58:23] My understanding is yes. That vetting process sometimes is taking two years, so that vetting process is extensive. It’s deep, so I believe the answer to that question is yes. Should it be stronger? I think it’s probably strong enough. The hard part is refugees come without paperwork. You don’t know who they are, where they’re from, really, and so the process is difficult.

Hassan Khalifeh: [14:27:29:02] Okay. Would you support the EB5 visa program to attract entrepreneurs into the state and give them green cards?


Sandra Svoboda: [14:27:38:27] Moving forward a little bit on immigration concerns and issues, the 2020 census and the citizenship question that’s proposed for it, how do you see that impacting Michigan?


Sandra Svoboda: [14:27:51:12] The debate has been over people not wanting to answer the census at all because that information is on there, or what the government would do with that information once they get it. Is that a fair characterization of the census, and how people are viewing it, and does the state have a role? It kind of speaks to the state’s role in immigration issues in the conversation that’s ongoing.

Jim Hines: [14:28:14:04] You know, I think there’s a group of people that are suspicious when it comes to what they would consider a large intrusive government, and I would support small limited government. If your concerns are “What are they going to do with this information? This is my private personal information,” then it becomes difficult to do a census. Maybe it might require someone walking around and looking and counting and that sort of thing.
Christy McDonald: [14:28:39:22] All right. Let’s move on to taxes and tax incentives. We’ll send it over to Riley.

Riley Beggin: [14:28:44:22] Many people in our audience wanted to know about taxes, insurance, and finance issues. From our audience member John, “Do you believe that economic development deals with tax credits, incentives, etc., are necessary and useful for Michigan’s communities?” What’s your position on tax incentives?

Jim Hines: [14:29:01:09] Well, I’m a fiscal conservative. I’m for taxes, regulations, and spending that are under control, decreasing taxes whenever you can. I think this is important. The reason is because it causes, and has been shown that it causes, businesses to grow, to thrive, to expand, to hire extra employees, to increase salaries, to multiply businesses. It’s a good thing. It’s good for our economy. It’s great for building Michigan.

I want to just throw in a little bit of the educational component to that because I think as we talk about taxes and regulations and so forth, we’re talking about, actually, workers. Again, that educational component of reading, writing, and being able to do simple math is so critically important to our economy. When the state picks winners and losers, this is tough because who is to say, who is to judge whether this company or this potential company is going to be a winner or a loser.

There are many scenarios where we’ve given millions of dollars to a company, and they haven’t been a winner. They’ve been a loser. I would say that we should be spreading those dollars out to all businesses. Rather than picking one business and give them a billion dollars, spread that out to other businesses to help them thrive and grow.

Riley Beggin: [14:30:29:23] Okay. You said decrease taxes wherever you can. Are you suggesting that you would decrease the Michigan business tax?

Jim Hines: [14:30:37:04] I think the first tax I would decrease would be the personal income tax.


Jim Hines: [14:30:45:24] I think right now it’s pretty good.


Christy McDonald: [14:30:49:24] Steve?

Stephen Carmody: [14:30:50:25] The economy’s doing well right now, but in all likelihood, we may be in a recession sometime in the next four years. Is there anything you
plan to do as governor to position the state so that it will be able to coast out a recession better than it has in the past?

Jim Hines: [14:31:08:29] Growing the economy is key and having individuals that are educated in reading, writing, and arithmetic so that they can go to where the jobs are. And they can thrive. As businesses thrive and as individuals thrive because they have a job, not just a paycheck--a paycheck is nothing, but living from paycheck to paycheck, I guess is what I’m saying, is not a worthy goal.

It should be having enough money that you can invest, that you can save for emergencies. So that if there’s a downturn in the economy and your refrigerator goes out, you’re not having to borrow the money but you actually have a savings to purchase that refrigerator or to go on that vacation or to pay down your debt.

Stephen Carmody: [14:32:01:27] Is there any place in the budget you want to save some money for the state’s new refrigerator, the state’s next vacation or any of the other things that the state needs to prepare for?

Jim Hines: [14:32:12:04] I think the rainy-day fund is what that’s for, and it’s at a billion dollars now. That looks pretty good.

Christy McDonald: [14:32:19:29] Dr. Hines, I want to ask you kind of a bigger picture look at how you believe people perceive the state of Michigan when it comes to businesses who may want to invest here or want to move here. We’ve seen a couple of high profile bids. Foxconn ended up going to Wisconsin. Amazon didn’t even put Detroit or Michigan in their top 20. What would you think that Michigan needs to do to make itself look better for big companies to want to come here and invest?

Jim Hines: [14:32:44:16] Currently, we’re shooing our families away from Michigan, and we’re not attracting families and individuals to Michigan. Why do I say that? Well, what’s the basis of that? I think that if we look at my family, I have seven sons. Five of those sons have all 16 of my grandchildren and not a one of them lives in Michigan. I’ve been trying with all my might to get them back to Michigan.

What does it take for a family to move back to the state? Well, it takes a good job so that you’re not living paycheck to paycheck. I believe it takes auto insurance that’s not going to cost an arm and a leg. It takes infrastructure, roads, that are not going to beat your car apart.

And so when you look at the cost of roads and that hidden tax on your auto repairs and the auto insurance costs, and to boot, you here “Well, educational system in the state of Michigan is not very good, and chances are your child is not going to learn to read or not going to be ready for college,” then why
would you come to Michigan? If we want to attract businesses, Foxcom, Amazon, then we have to have an infrastructure, including education, that meets their needs, and we don’t have that.

Sandra Svoboda: [14:34:13:24] Do you think transit plays into that? We hear that a lot in the Detroit area. Younger people want transit to do not as much driving to get to and from work and other things; yet, we have a very diverse state, rural and urban areas that would inform any transit policy that you would have in the governor’s office. Could you speak to that issue?

Jim Hines: [14:34:30:20] I think a transit system is very important. Now, is it mandatory? When you look at our young people, those that are in grad school and those that are going to be working at places like Amazon, they don’t want to drive. They want to get into that electric car, autonomous vehicle, and do their thing and have them take them to work. Transportation is critically important, and we’ve talked about mobility.

But the roads are the priority. We’ve gotten things out of order. So we’re talking about autonomous cars and electric cars. Do you want to drive a high-performance vehicle on any road in Michigan? And the answer is no, you don’t. So we’ve got to get the basics done. I consider our infrastructure, our education, and our jobs the building blocks for this state. The cornerstone of those three building blocks is education.

Because without the education, you’re just not going to be that successful. You may have a menial job, but you’re not going to get that high paying job.

Christy McDonald: [14:35:39:20] Erin has a specific question about auto insurance rates.

Erin Einhorn: [14:35:42:14] Yeah. You touched on auto insurance rates saying that they’re too high, and this was actually a question that Debbie and Ray in our audience had asked us to ask you. That’s specifically what would you do to get those rates down?

Jim Hines: [14:35:56:20] It’s a huge problem. It’s keeping families from moving to the state. When you look at your bill, you’re probably “oh, my goodness. This is so high.” We have to do something. What’s been done in the past hasn’t worked. We have term limited politicians that say “oh, I have this plan. I have this plan.” It hasn’t been done. One of the reasons is, I believe, that the auto insurance packages have been too large, too many components to it. I would suggest that we have only two components.

One is a fraud agency to get rid of the fraud in the system, and the second is a fee schedule, a fee schedule that’s transparent. For example, Riley, if you have an accident and you need an x-ray of your arm, it’s going to cost $65. If you’re in an auto accident and you have the same exact x-ray, it’s over $600. What’s the deal? There needs to be a fee schedule with transparency, and the
cost should be the same. That will markedly decrease the cost of our auto insurance. We’re estimating about 50%.

Christy McDonald: [14:37:09:13] Hassan?

Hassan Khalifeh: [14:37:10:21] Yeah. I wanted to ask you about what you thought of the tensions between the United States and Canadian governments, Canada being the largest international trading partner with Michigan. How do you think that will affect your relationship with your counterpart in Ontario?

Jim Hines: [14:37:31:22] We’ve had an excellent relationship with Canada. Of course, we take 18% of their trash. Tariffs have a way of causing concern whether you’re looking at dairy milk or whatever product it is. There’s been a severe imbalance in import and export, and I think our president has been trying to address that. That’s created a lot of friction.

I believe, however, that that discussion is really important. In the end run, we will be better off for it because there will be a balance there. The friction is going to be necessary for a while, but I believe that it will correct itself.

Christy McDonald: [14:38:13:27] Okay. Let’s take a look a little bit at transparency. Riley?

Riley Beggin: [14:38:16:10] What’s your stance on the ballot measure to create an independent citizens’ redistricting commission? And if you pose voters, not politicians, what would you suggest instead to fix the problem that some would say is jerrymandering?

Jim Hines: [14:38:30:23] Are we jerrymandering? Have we jerrymandered? That’s an open question. The standards that we’re using now are the apicol standards that have been in existence for many, many years, and they have gone to the Michigan Supreme Court. These standards look at county lines and municipal boundaries. For the most part, I don’t believe there has been jerrymandering.

Every ten years, they’re looked at. The legislature looks at them, and they’re voted on, approved by the governor. And that’s been an appropriate system, in my opinion. What’s being proposed is a commission with independent individuals making that decision apart from the legislature, apart for the governor, through the secretary of state. I don’t believe that that’s appropriate.

Riley Beggin: [14:39:21:08] So change nothing?


Christy McDonald: [14:39:27:00] Okay. Sandra?
Sandra Svoboda: [14:39:27:29] Michigan recently received the lowest rating among all the states in a transparency index for openness of government. I’m interested in what you would pursue as governor to maybe boost our rating in that, if you think that’s something that should be done, and I guess I’m specifically interested in the Freedom of Information Act and campaign finance disclosures?

Jim Hines: [14:39:47:17] I think transparency’s important because it leads to accountability. When you don’t have transparency, you can kind of do what you want. Nobody knows, and human nature leads you down a path that’s not the best for the citizens of this state. So transparency’s important. I think the Freedom of Information Act should apply to the governor, should apply to our legislature. That should include financial disclosure of assets and what you’re doing with your funds.

It should include conflict of interest so that when you’re voting on a bill and you have an interest in that company, you shouldn’t be voting. And everybody should know that you have a conflict of interest. The question I think is where the bike comes because we have an attorney general, if I can bring him up, that has talked about financial disclosure. He’s disclosed his income, taxes, every year for the last seven years, and yet, he has had millions of dollars off site, not in the United States, that he’s been dealing with all at the same time when he’s calling everybody else to financial disclosure.

I think what’s good for a leader should be good for everybody else. That discussion that I’m bringing up, transparency leads to accountability, but there has to be some accountability. You have to know that, really, we are being honest and opened and truthful. That’s what will make a better Michigan. What we want is we want a better Michigan. That includes being opened and above board and telling the truth.

Christy McDonald: [14:41:23:12] All right. We just have about five, six minutes left. We want to get to a couple more questions, so, Steve, I’m going to go to you for the medical marijuana question.

Stephen Carmody: [14:41:30:00] Actually, I want to focus more on recreational marijuana, since we’ll be voting on that in the fall. Michiganders voting on recreational marijuana this fall. What’s your opinion? Do you think that that should pass? Are you against it? If you’re for it, why? If not, why not?

Jim Hines: [14:41:45:06] So let me start off by saying I support medical marijuana. I have dozens of patients that have gone off all of their regular chronic medications taking medical marijuana. So I support that. I think that there needs to be regulations and further research to know exactly why the CBD
component of marijuana seems to work in so many different illnesses and problems, not just chronic back pain and so forth.

Recreational marijuana is a different story. I don’t support recreational marijuana. When it goes to the ballot and if the voters of the state were to approve it, then I would support it. However, I think that it would need to be regulated. We still need the research to know what’s the incidence of lung cancer. When you’re on a heart medication and you’re on recreational marijuana, does that medication need to be adjusted? What’s the proper dose?

There are so many questions that have to be answered with recreational marijuana. In addition, just practically, how do you keep it away from minors? How do you deal with school bus drivers on marijuana? They should be clean of marijuana, or police officers that stop someone that is driving erratically and they test positive for marijuana, how do you deal with that and how do you keep that from happening? So there’s a lot of regulation issues that have to be discussed.

Christy McDonald: [14:43:08:05] All right. You know what? We’re going to move to the fun question part. I think everything’s been fun so far, but we’re going to kind of end up on a little bit of a lighter note and just get some rapid-fire questions here and get your answers. We’re going to start, Erin, with you.


Erin Einhorn: [14:43:22:27] All right. Well, my question is what is the make and model of the cars that you and other members of your household are currently driving?

Jim Hines: [14:43:33:12] Wow. Ford Escape 2014, the Hines Mobile, which is an RV. It’s my mobile office. It’s a Ford 450, and then I have a son who drives a Chevy. All my kids?

Erin Einhorn: [14:43:49:10] Well, the ones who are currently in your household.


Christy McDonald: [14:43:54:08] Okay. Sandra?

Sandra Svoboda: [14:43:55:18] I’m interested in who your favorite Michigan authors are and also your favorite Michigan foods.


Jim Hines: [14:44:10:00] Very healthy. Favorite Michigan author? There’s an author at Hayton Lake. I haven’t read the book, but it’s a mystery writer out of Hayton Lake. Shaker’s is one of my favorite restaurants, and they have him on the counter. There’s about ten. Patrick Jones or something like that. I haven’t read the book, but I would say--I love mystery books, so if I were to read those, that would be my favorite Michigan author.


Hassan Khalifeh: [14:44:42:20] I just wanted to go back to the race a little bit. Can you recall an interesting or touching moment along the campaign trail while talking to voters?

Jim Hines: [14:44:53:28] Yes. Can it deal with me?


Jim Hines: [14:45:00:12] The day when my fourth son, Titus, came to me and said, “Dad, can you watch the two grandchildren because my wife and I are going to go to Florida in search for a full-time job?” And I cried. They left, and within a week found a full-time job, came back. They were back for about three days, packed up their stuff in a U-Haul and left Michigan. That was with me.

Christy McDonald: [14:45:32:24] Okay. Riley?

Riley Beggin: [14:45:34:12] What are you reading right now? What’s the book on your nightstand?

Jim Hines: [14:45:37:20] The book on my nightstand? It’s called “Seven Men” by Eric Metaxas. It lists seven historical figures. He also wrote a book “Seven Women,” but I’m reading “Seven Men” now. It’s actually been a couple months since I have been in that book. Winston Churchill was one of the men, of the seven.

Christy McDonald: [14:46:04:29] Great. Steve?

Stephen Carmody: [14:46:06:16] What makes for a good weekend? If you’re not on the campaign trail, you’re just having a weekend. When you think about it, what would you like to do?

Jim Hines: [14:46:14:11] I love to sit around the campfire, so we have a little place up north. And just having a campfire, it’s on the lake, just sitting there, roasting some marshmallows.

Christy McDonald: [14:46:26:23] What was your first job?
Jim Hines: [14:46:28:27] I was a paper boy, age 12, and I learned so much because I learned that if I didn’t put the paper where it was supposed to be at the right time, I didn’t get a tip.

Christy McDonald: [14:46:40:07] And how long were you a paper boy?


Christy McDonald: [14:46:42:18] All right. That is going to do it. That concludes our conversation with Republican candidate for governor, Jim Hines. Dr. Hines, thank you so much for joining us. Many thanks to the John S. and James L. Knight foundation for its support. On behalf of the Detroit Journalism Cooperative, I’m Christy McDonald. Thanks so much for joining us.

Jim Hines: [14:46:59:10] And thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to be here. Really good questions. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.