

GSSCC Candidate Questionnaire **County Executive & County Council**

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Elected Office You are Seeking: County Council - At Large

Legislative District: At-Large

Number of Years Lived in that District: 25 years

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Relevant Non-governmental Professional Experience/Positions Held:

- Current President and CEO of the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce
- Executive Director of BlackRock Center for the Arts
- Certified Public Accountant, KPMG
- I was also a federal contract with Department of Energy for many years

1. GSSCC believes that a thriving business community brings prosperity for all of our citizens by increasing the number of good private sector jobs and expanding the tax base to support necessary public services.

- Please list all the initiatives/legislation you have supported/or would support to foster the growth of existing businesses and encourage new business creation.

Through the years, members of the County Council have asked the business community for suggested legislation that would help support business. The best support would be to “first do no harm” and to consider the impact on business prior to the development of ANY policy or legislation.

I have been actively involved in a number of issues. The list is very long, but here is a sample.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I have consistently supported funding for economic development in the County, including;

- Creation of Montgomery Business Development Corporation (MBDC)
- Creation of Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC)
- Creation of WorkSource Montgomery
- Creation of the Small Business Navigator
- Creation of the Montgomery County Development Ombudsman
- Creation of the Germantown Liaison for DED

LAND USE

I actively support the full implementation of a number of Master Plans and regularly testify on behalf of projects that go before the Planning Board and the Council including:

- Germantown Master Plan (through my leadership, my chamber commissioned a ULI study in advance of the Germantown Master Plan)
- Great Seneca Science Corridor / Co-chair the community implementation committee
- Montgomery Village Master Plan
- Shady Grove Sector Plan
- I've also worked on the growth policy / subdivision staging policy through the years.

EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE REGULATIONS

I have actively worked with the County Council and various Chambers of Commerce to mitigate the negative impact of the following bills:

- Ban the Box
- Minimum Wage (both bills)
- Mandatory Sick Leave
- Allergen Training
- Minimum Work Week (has not passed)

OTHER LEGISLATION

- Building signage
- Privatization of DLC
- Energy Tax
- Recordation Tax
- DPS Fees

As for future legislation, the County Executive commissioned a study on improving business services in Montgomery County - [Improving Business Services](#). The Report identified a number of recommendations that focus on how the County can serve businesses better. This would be a great place to start. Examples include

- Improve the process of opening a business in the County.
- Ensure more responsive services, faster permits, faster building approvals
- Improve County interactions and overall business friendliness and adopt a more supportive, pro-business attitude and listen better to concerns of businesses

Other program / policy initiatives would include:

- Creating tax incentives to help support private employee training programs.
- Eliminating the increase in the Energy Tax
- Implementation and enforcement of employer related legislation needs to be taken away from the Office of Human Rights, which is punitive, and done in a manner that supports business (e.g. Mandatory sick leave).

2. Please describe your plan for increasing the tax base – rather than tax rates – in the County.

The first thing we need to do is to stop the rhetoric that pits businesses against residents. Business is good for Montgomery County and the County Council needs to partner with businesses and help them succeed. I would support MCEDC and WorkSource Montgomery and hold them accountable for adding a full range of jobs to the County.

I would identify core areas in which to focus our economic development efforts. For instance, we need to reestablish our preeminence in tech/biotech in Montgomery

County. We also need to support our entrepreneurs and create an environment where businesses can create, expand, grow and STAY in Montgomery County.

3. What is your plan for making Montgomery County more attractive to businesses looking to expand or relocate (i.e. increased tax incentives, subsidies, streamlining the development approval process)?

I believe in tax incentives for attraction, retention, AND expansion of jobs in Montgomery County.

Repeated from Q1: As for future legislation, the County Executive commissioned a study on improving business services in Montgomery County. [Improving Business Services](#)

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4. Montgomery County leaders have continued to approve increases in the County's operating budget that require spending at levels exceeding private sector growth. GSSCC believes the County government needs to do a better job of living within its means. This is even more important given the recent announcement of a \$120 million revenue shortfall for the current fiscal year.

- Did you or would you have supported the 2016 property tax increase?

I would have supported a smaller tax increase. I know this is a very tepid answer, but for the most part "it depends". It is difficult to say without being full entrenched in the numbers and having a full understanding of the needs and resources. I don't believe I would have increased more than the County Executive's request.

- Did you or would you have supported the 2016 recordation tax increase?

No - it creates a disincentive for home ownership.

- Did you or would you have supported the eventual phase out of the County's exorbitant energy tax? Yes

- Other than raising taxes, what ideas do you have for creating an economy that will meet the growing needs of county residents? Answered in Q:2. We need to create a full partnership with businesses in Montgomery County and create a culture in Montgomery County of helping businesses grow. The most significant way to do this is to listen to the concerns of business owners and stop passing legislation that makes it difficult to do business in the County.

- Would you support consolidation of some County Government functions in order to reduce costs? If so, please describe which programs or services you would recommend be consolidated, reduced, or eliminated.

Yes, I would certainly be in favor of reducing costs at the County, although I am not willing to say which Departments should be eliminated / consolidated without having complete financial information.

I am a proponent of zero-based budgeting. We need to have a fresh look at what it costs to deliver the services we need in the County. The current structure creates a disincentive for Departments to save money by reducing their spending.

3. In recent years, our members have faced an increasing number of federal, state, and expanded local regulations that directly impact their ability to remain viable.

- Did you or would you have supported the additional increase to the Montgomery County minimum wage to \$15 by 2020?

I did not support the initial \$15/hour proposed legislation of \$15 by 2020 which was vetoed by the County Executive. Based on the lengthy discussions I had with small business owners, this was "too much, too soon". I also believe that minimum wage should be legislated by the State with consideration given to surrounding jurisdictions.

With amendments, the bill that passed the Council was a major improvement pushing implementation for very small employers out to 2024, which is roughly 3.5% increase per year vs. a 10% increase. While this was a good compromise, I would have pushed for a longer implementation period for medium sized employers or changed the definition of small business from 10 to 50.

For me, the fatal flaw in the final bill is that the exemption for youth employment should not be restricted by length of employment. The exemption should be based solely on age. I understand that there are employees under the age of 18 who provide necessary income for their families, however this legislation is likely to have a negative impact on youth employment. As I've heard from business owners, they were a lot more willing to hire a high-school student with no experience for a lower hourly wage. With a \$15 minimum wage, employers will be more reluctant to hire these inexperienced workers.

- Did you or would you have supported mandatory sick leave, even for part-time employees?

I did not support the mandatory sick leave bill in its final form based on the definition of small business and the number of hours for part-time employees. The bill as it stands creates a burden for very small businesses. I think sick and safe leave should be regulated by the State and advocated for preemption of the State bill.

- Do you support an employer's right to hire and schedule its employees according to its individual needs? Yes

Do you support legislation that dictates minimum work hours or scheduling requirements? No

- What policy ideas do you have to enhance the success of our member job-creators? I would like to focus on incentives for employee training and the creation of apprenticeship programs. I would also like to see more support for getting products to

market. We have a great environment for the creation of ideas, we need to do a better job with technology transfer.

4. Prior to considering any legislation, the County Council seeks a Fiscal Impact Statement to determine the impact of that legislation on the County's budget.

- Would you support a law that requires the same kind of analysis to determine the fiscal economic impact on businesses and non-profits, prior to consideration and enactment of any new law or regulation? Yes.

- Would you require that this analysis include interviews and discussions with actual business owners?

No, I would not require interviews and discussions if the data is available by others means. But as a Council member, I would be vigilant in assessing the fiscal impact on business.

5. Many of our small- and medium-sized business members feel that the policies adopted most recently by County government reflect a lack of appreciation for the contributions they make to our community. Please describe your understanding of the difference between the challenges faced by large multinational companies and small locally owned/operated businesses.

The differences are many. As for size, the primary difference is access to capital. Most small businesses have a finite amount of cash or access to cash. Once those funds are exhausted small businesses have no choice but to reduce staff, reduce costs, and ultimately close their doors. Large multinationals tend to have much more access to capital during tough times. They can adapt more easily to fluctuations in the market.

As for being local, small locally owned businesses have more of a commitment to their community. They are more engaged with the community in terms of philanthropy and volunteerism. A good example is that locally grown businesses are much more likely to join their local Chamber of Commerce than multinationals.

Provide three specific examples of how you will support small businesses and ensure opportunities for them to grow and expand.

1. Review the small business reserve program. I hear feedback from business owners that system is too labor intensive with a small chance of getting a contract.
2. Look at skills based training and seminars to offer to all levels of business. Often people start a business because they are good at their craft, but not necessarily good at running a business.
3. I will listen to business owners and their representatives to hear their concerns, ideas, recommendations for the business climate in the County.
4. Bonus tactic - I would suggest small businesses join their local chamber of commerce.

6. The Silver Spring Central Business District was envisioned to become a smart-growth live/work/play community. However, in recent years, Silver Spring has evolved into a primarily residential neighborhood (bedroom community), with virtually no commercial office development in the past 10 years. Local retailers and restaurants are feeling the brunt of having fewer and fewer customers during office hours. What will you do to address this and help bring more businesses back to Silver Spring?

Working with MCEDC and the County Executive, I would encourage commercial development throughout the County. I know the County is currently focusing on the developments of White Flint and White Oak which are both important for different reasons. However we can't ignore other parts of the County. Coming from Germantown, I know that all parts of the County do not get the same level of attention and service. Through the years, we have been actively promoting our assets and working with County and State economic development resources to attract new jobs. As a Councilmember, I will do my best to make sure all communities get the attention they need.

7. The Route 29 Corridor in Eastern Montgomery County has suffered from a lack of commercial and other development for many years. Traffic congestion has increased, and most of it is through traffic to the Beltway or downtown D.C. Few, if any new employment opportunities have been created to provide jobs that would take these cars off the road. What are you going to do to ensure economic development that brings new businesses to Silver Spring including downtown and the East County/Rt. 29 Corridor?

My answer is the same as above. We cannot look at Economic Development like it's a zero sum game. We need to make sure all areas of the County are marketed as attractive places to locate, create, grow, and expand businesses

8. The Chamber supports a balanced approach to transportation policies that take into account the needs of our member businesses, their employees, their customers, and their vendors. That balance must accommodate those who use public transit, drive on our roads, travel by bicycle and on foot, and need sufficient parking options at their destination.

- Please describe your approach to finding the right balance of transit, roads, parking, and other transportation options.

We need all modes of transportation. I am all in favor of transit, but most people drive. We can continue to identify ways to reduce the use of single occupancy vehicles, but we should not assume that most people will leave their cars for transit. We have to build, expand, improve our road infrastructure.

- How will you assure the future success of the Metro?

I support designated funding for Metro. Along with a lock box for casino revenue.

- What will you do to address the needs and concerns of businesses that expect to be harmed financially during the construction of The Purple Line?

I think the State should provide grants to impacted business owners. If the State declines, the County needs to step up to help business get through the construction phase. There has been precedent in the County to do so.

9. What is your vision for the future of greater Silver Spring and Montgomery County over the next 5 years?

There will be significant changes in Silver Spring with Discovery and MNCPPC headquarters leaving and the Purple Line coming through. I would like to see a major push to get one or two large employers to take the place of Discovery and MNCPPC.

The County needs to make sure that Silver Spring maintains / increases its commercial vitality. I will work with MCEDC throughout the transition.

10. If elected, how will you measure your success at the end of your term?

- Economy - I would like to see a more robust economy with increased job growth and career pathways for people starting at lower pay grades.
- Transportation - Although the County doesn't have control over State funded projects, I would hope that we can secure additional transportation funding for projects like I-270 and the Corridor Cities Transitway.
- Education - I will be pushing for early childhood education and an increase in skills based training at the high school level.