



**GSSCC Candidate Questionnaire**  
**Montgomery County Council – At-Large**

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Elected Office You are Seeking: Montgomery County Council

Legislative District: At-Large

Number of Years Lived in that District: 46

Party Affiliation: Republican

Relevant Non-governmental Professional Experience/Positions Held: CEO, Suburban News Network

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.

**Build a new Potomac River crossing to Dulles Airport; international businesses who have chosen Northern Virginia over MoCo have cited the need for direct access to Dulles. Repeal the 2016 property tax and 2010 energy tax hikes incrementally over 4 years. Make our tax and regulation scheme more competitive with our rivals in the region. I would introduce a bill requiring 2 existing regulations to be struck from the books for each new regulation put on business. Strongly support Gov. Hogan's plan for Express Lanes on 495/270.**

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

**We must end the current Council's wrongheaded focus on residential development. What we need are more corporate headquarters - especially aerospace, defense and tech firms, with their high-wage jobs, and related research and high-tech manufacturing facilities. We also must tie those new firms to our public schools, to coordinate and generate the highly-skilled workforce they need, thereby attracting even more desirable employers. The answer is to have more businesses, more people making higher taxable incomes, rather than more housing that simply generates more school construction and service costs.**

- 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've outlined some in my previous answers. Tax incentives and subsidies are going to be necessary until we turn our anti-business climate around. Certainly streamline approvals for major corporate headquarters, as Ike Leggett has introduced.**

2. 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?

No

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

No

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

**Yes, phase out over 4 years.**

- Other than raising taxes, what ideas do you have for creating an economy that will meet the growing needs of county residents?

**See my responses to Question 1 above. In addition, stop fighting the future - our stuck-in-the-60s County Council has taxed Uber and Lyft, and effectively banned airbnb for guests and landlords alike. We need to embrace innovation, not fight it, especially when things like de facto banning airbnb have taken moneymaking opportunities away from our residents. Did you know that, before the Council's effective ban on airbnb, that Silver Spring was one of the most profitable locations in Maryland for airbnb landlords?**

- 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. Health and Human Services would be one department to focus heavily on in that effort.**

- Other comments:

**I would strongly push for adoption of Zero-Based Budgeting. Instead of assuming the same bloated operating budget comes back as the starting point for even more spending next year, we start at zero each year. Then we have each department and program justify every dollar they are asking for.**

**Secondly, we have massive wasteful spending. One small example: In May 2017, the Council approved a \$23,000 outlay for a 4-camera security system. Such a system could be assembled for \$1000 today. Imagine how much money we are wasting with a Council that is out-of-touch with technology, and doesn't understand the value of a dollar.**

**Third, the Council must stop putting political/ideological requirements on government contractors. This is a trend that has gone unnoticed by most. For example, the Council will say that only firms who offer certain benefits to their employees can bid on County contracts. If, unlike the Council, you understand how markets work, you would immediately recognize that the fewer firms who can bid on a contract, the higher the fee those firms can charge us. This has massively increased the costs to taxpayers across the board on all government contracting. I will bet I am the only candidate who has brought this issue up.**

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?

No.

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

No.

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?

**In addition to the many I've offered above, we must end the County's monopoly on liquor sales. The DLC should be eliminated, and liquor distribution fully privatized. The liquor monopoly is literally killing our local restaurants and bars, and deterring other top-flight restaurateurs from entering the County. Beer and wine sales should be allowed at all grocery, drug and convenience stores. Existing beer and wine stores should be allowed to sell hard liquor. We are currently losing so much in dining and nightlife business to D.C. in particular, and on massive liquor-buying dollars flowing to N.W. D.C. and Virginia, instead of to our business owners and County tax coffers.**

- Other comments:

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. We just saw the effect of this with the minimum wage increase. The FY-2019 budget has spending increases to cover the cost of the minimum wage hike on non-profits. Very unfair to taxpayers.**
  - Would you require that this analysis include interviews and discussions with actual business owners?

**Yes.**

- Why or why not?

**As you can see from some of the Council votes over the last 8 years, and the moribund state of our private-sector economy, the Council is not listening to our business owners whatsoever.**

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

**1. Create a new zoning overlay for small businesses when existing shopping centers are redeveloped. 2. Reduce taxes, fees and regulations. 3. Restore access for food trucks on public streets in places like downtown Silver Spring and Bethesda. Food trucks were a way for a chef to enter the business, eventually making the transition to a bricks and mortar restaurant. That opportunity was stolen when Councilmember Hans Riemer, under pressure from his campaign donors, pushed through a ban on food trucks in public street parking spaces. 96% of food trucks either went out of business, or retreated into the District. Food trucks add to the vibrancy of urban areas, and are sought after by the very young professionals Riemer falsely claimed he wanted to attract to Montgomery County. Let's elect someone who actually knows what he's doing.**

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?

**This is a countywide problem, the result of the Council's obsessive focus on residential development, rather than on economic development as a whole. And the result of our Council's notorious anti-business approach. Most recently, it's the result of the Council spending time debating a ban on circus animals, instead of actively courting Discovery Communications to stay in Silver Spring.**

**Again, what we need are more corporate headquarters in downtown Silver Spring. Silver Spring could have had Hilton Hotels, Volkswagen, Corporate Executive Board, Nestle, Intelsat, and more, but they all went to Northern Virginia. Why? NoVa has invested in new transportation infrastructure, while our elected officials have sat on their hands for 16 years. NoVa has lower taxes and fewer regulations, to state the obvious, and their schools are at least as good as ours.**

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?

**I think the Rt. 29 corridor is one of the places we should be marketing (along with the I-270 corridor) to aerospace, defense and tech firms, who need a more-suburban office park setting for security reasons. Move jobs, not homes, into the East County, and we can get many of those cars off the road by shortening commutes for our residents in that area. We also need something in the East County near I-95 to generate more attention and excitement about the area. The Wizards/Capitals and Redskins are all searching for new homes - we should be in the running for at least one of those, but instead our Council is again asleep at the switch. Why not downtown Silver Spring for the Wizards/Capitals, and East County near 95 for the Redskins? At rock bottom in growth of new business enterprises regionally, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Montgomery County needs to think BIG, not small.**

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.

**In the context of our ongoing structural deficit, our guide needs to be prioritizing the transportation projects that move the most people for the least money. That means focusing first on P3 or privately-built toll facilities like the Hogan Express Lanes plan, and a new toll bridge across the Potomac to Dulles Airport. We must also complete long-delayed County funded projects like M-83 upcounty, Montrose Parkway East (which should eventually extend to the ICC), and the Norbeck-Georgia Avenue interchange.**

**Providing adequate public transit is a basic function of government. Rather than spend \$10 billion on BRT, I would use a fraction of that money to add more buses that could reduce headways on busy routes, add express buses, and modernize the aging Ride On fleet.**

**Adequate parking is a must for a successful commercial area. Silver Spring has enough for now, but it makes the County look bad when the payment stations regularly are broken in the garage across from the Civic Center. We've got to execute the basic functions of government better.**

**For pedestrians, we need to start enforcing the laws prohibiting sidewalk closures alongside construction sites.**

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

**I think the Maryland funding agreement is a good start. I support dedicated funding, but it must be tied to fiscal, leadership, performance and safety reforms at WMATA.**

- 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 fear it's too late. The Council already gave away the store, and the weak agreement they devised is a joke with no teeth. If elected, I will do everything in my power to assist those businesses - and residents - who will likely be pushed out through gentrification. The most important thing now is to elect people who will not repeat the mistakes of the current Council on future infrastructure projects.**

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

**Creating a business-friendly climate, and building the missing transportation structure we know is necessary to attract new corporate headquarters and related facilities. Energizing downtown Silver Spring with an influx of thousands of new office workers who will dine and shop at local businesses. Reinvigorating East County with high-wage jobs, corporate campuses and a Redskins stadium. Making sure there are good schools in every neighborhood. And equally important, protecting the suburban and rural character of our existing residential neighborhoods, through responsible growth and planning policies.**

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

**By the end of my term, I want to have completed the 495/270 Express Lanes, M-83 Highway, Montrose Parkway East, and the Norbeck-Georgia interchange, and begun construction of the new Potomac River crossing. Commuters should find their travel times shorter and more-predictable. East County schools should be performing as well as those in Bethesda, Rockville and Potomac.**

**I want to have attended the ribbon-cutting of the first new major corporate headquarters to open in Montgomery County in two decades (Choice Hotels and Marriott were already here). I want to have attended the season openers at the new Wizards/Capitals arena in downtown Silver Spring, and Redskins stadium in East County.**

**I want to have a new Planning Board with commissioners who are committed to representing the interests of our residents and businesses, and to have eliminated the threat of gang violence from our streets, schools and public spaces.**

**Most of all, I want to restore faith that our Council can again listen to and represent our residents and taxpayers, competently execute the basic functions of government, seize the economic development opportunities the Council has ignored for two decades, and replace corruption with integrity.**