



GSSCC Candidate Questionnaire
Montgomery County Council – At-Large

Name: Richard Gottfried
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Elected Office You are Seeking: MC Council At-Large
Legislative District: At-Large
Number of Years Lived in that District: 28 years
Party Affiliation: Democratic
Relevant Non-governmental Professional Experience/Positions Held: _____
Vice-President Maryland Society of Accounting and Tax Professionals, Prepare and audited large budgets, Board Member(up to 15), Strategic Planning Chair

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.

Answer:

Attract Talent, Retain Talent, and Retrain Talent!
Keep Montgomery County affordable and livable. Support our Small Businesses by providing Moderately Priced Business Units (MPBU's) and offer a Small Business Tax Credit. Supporting small businesses is essential to the economic health of our County.

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

Answer:

Provide MPBU's to home-based businesses so that they can afford to rent a commercial rent based on their sales and then as their sales increases so does the rent. I believe that Launch Workplaces has a program in place already for affordable business units. Attract Talent, Retain Talent by providing small business tax credits and Retrain Talent by working with Montgomery College to retool our workforce.

- 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)?

Answer:

Offer a small business tax relief credit such as providing paid sick leave for employers with less than 25 employees, a qualified transportation fringe, a dependent care assistance program, an educational assistance program, or employer contribution to a Health Savings Plan.

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?

Answer:

No. I agree as the fiscally responsible candidate we needed to understand the issue and the problem. First of all we have a sunk cost in the amount of \$100million dollars which includes no capital gain tax collected, the Wynne tax case refunds to the State and the State moving the pension funding from the State to the County to fund. I will do a better job as a CPA and with extensive governmental budget experience for the County to live within its means.

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

Answer:

No. We need to understand that the increase in the recordation tax happened because MC needed a funding source to renovate and construct new schools. What MC needed to do was to go after our fair share from the Education Trust Fund that was promised to us back in 2009. \$300 million in casino revenue at 21% vs in 2017 \$1.4 billion dollars in casino revenue only at 18%. The State kept our money to fund their operating budget.

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

Answer:

Yes. We should have a partnership with businesses and residents sharing at 50-50 each in this tax.

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

Answer: We have a new economy for example, Uber, Lyft, AirBnB and Marijuana that MC should be receiving a local tax from its independent contractors, landlords of AirBnB, etc.

- Would you support consolidation of some County Government functions in order to reduce costs?

Answer: We should be looking for ways to reduce costs if they are redundant so that our tax dollars are effectively and efficiently spent.

- If so, please describe which programs or services you would recommend be consolidated, reduced, or eliminated.

Answer: After I am elected to the Council, I will be looking into this and will let you know where we can consolidate, reduced or eliminate duplicated services.

- Other comments:

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?

Answer: Pitting employers against employees is not a good scenario. No one wins and one side will always lose. What we need to understand is the why we need to raise the min. wage to \$15. The real reason MC needed to raise the min. wage is because the cost of living outpaced increased in wages in MC. So what we need to do is to figure out how we can reasonable reduce the cost of living in MC. Then we do not have to raise the min. wage and small businesses will not have to go out of business or raise their prices that no one can afford. We need to choose a different path.

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

Answer: As a small business owner and a Controller for small to medium –sized businesses for over ten years, my suggestion would have been to give employees x? personal days off whatever the proper number of days works for employers on an employer by employer basis for example one employer policy could say to the employee that you have 10 personal days to take in the year as whatever you need them for whether it is for vacation, sick, funeral, bereavement, etc.

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

Answer: Why is the government getting involved with a company's employee handbook policies? We need to stay out of this subject. Let the employer's run their company as they see fit.

- Do you support legislation that dictates minimum work hours or scheduling requirements?

Answer: Why is the government getting involved with a company's employee handbook policies? We need to stay out of this subject. Let the employer's run their company as they see fit.

- What policy ideas do you have to enhance the success of our member job-creators?
Answer: If elected, I will propose legislation to offer Small Businesses a Tax Relief Credit.
- 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?

Answer: Yes I would.

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

Answer: Yes I would.

- Why or why not?

Answer: My governance style is from the bottom up and not from the top down. The council needs to make common-sense policies that the residents and businesses want and not what the government wants.

This is how I worked as the President of the Twinbrook Citizens Association and how I work on the board of directors for the Maryland Society of Accounting and Tax Professionals

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.

Answer:

- 1. Per my previous answer about offering small business tax credits, these credits would be based on employer incentives to employees based on several types of fringe benefits offered for example, transportation, contribution to a H.S.A. plan, contribution to a 401k, etc.**
- 2. I would be proposing new legislation on MPBU's – moderately priced business unit's so that our home based businesses can move into our vacant commercial buildings to rent space at realistic rental prices based on sales and sales our home based businesses sales increase so does the rent. Therefore, our home based businesses can grow to a small based business then can grow to a medium sized business to a large based business!**
- 3. Better signage laws**

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?

Answer: As I walk thru the neighborhoods in the County, the Colesville area shopping center is also hurting as small businesses and retail shops and grocery stores are leaving the shopping center.

Here are my suggestions to help bring more businesses back to silver spring:

- 1. A place where young people live, work and play. Increase the entertainment scene for young people and keep these businesses open up to 2am. Otherwise, they will continue to go to DC.**
- 2. Obtain data about the City. We need to do a survey from the residents on what bars, restaurants, entertainment places they want to see in the City.**
- 3. Position SS as an international city. Silver Spring is a very diverse community. Market all of the cultures that live in Silver Spring.**
- 4. Elect, support and appoint visionary leaders like Richard Gottfried to the Council At-Large.**
- 5. Identify and exploit your cachet.**
- 6. Do a SWOT analysis of your town to identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.**

7. Bring the community together to form a vision and set goals for local economic improvement.
8. Make sure the local newspaper editor or publisher is involved in the effort, or at least kept apprised of developments
9. Create a plan to present to the community. Make sure it reflects a bit of something that everyone wanted
10. Offer incentives to new businesses to locate in the community. These could include property tax breaks, micro-loans and discounted fees and permits. Other businesses in the community can also offer enticements, such as discounted ad rates and good press for the new business or special deals on gym or club memberships for employees of new businesses. **All of the businesses can cross market themselves with discounts or incentives to do business in Silver Spring.**
11. Market the community and advertise business benefits to would-be business owners
12. Keep local business in the public eye by praising its contributions and update the economic development plan

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?
Answer: See my answer above. Work with the MC economic development.

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.

Answer: As we update our sector plans community by community all of the pieces in the transportation plan need to be updated as well.

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

Answer: We need to fund the Metro along with our partner cities in DC and VA.

- 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?

Answer:

Update state regulations to enable business owners along the Purple Line route to claim profit losses due to construction.

The state has a [Neighborhood Business Development Program](#) that receives about \$5 million in state funds each year. The proposal calls for setting aside about \$1 million each year during Purple Line construction to enable businesses in Montgomery and Prince George's counties to apply for a bridge grant or reimbursement for losses attributed to Purple Line construction.

The state would have to evaluate an applicant's financials to determine its losses.

There is a bill that could be approved by the General Assembly in 2018 to enable businesses to access the funds starting in 2019. A third part of a proposal includes establishing tax-exempt zones for businesses in the light-rail line's construction zone that would exempt them from state property and income taxes during construction.

Several merchants have said that if they lose significant parking or foot traffic on Bonifant Street, they'll lose money and might have to close. The same could be true for other business districts that

could be affected along the route. But once the Purple Line is complete, the businesses will have increased foot traffic and better connections to transit.

The program being proposed is modeled after a similar program the Montgomery County Council approved to provide funds to businesses affected by the county's major redevelopment project in Wheaton.

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

Answer: The reshaping of government thru fiscally responsible leadership which creates an economically vibrant community.

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

Answer: My two transportation projects will be implemented and carried out with regards to utilizing the service lanes on I-270 during rush hour and using Smart Traffic Signals to allow us to get us thru our neighborhoods faster.

Legislation for small businesses to afford commercial office rent and increase the economy in Montgomery County.

To ensure that our property taxes are being fiscally responsible spent.