



GSSCC Candidate Questionnaire County Executive & County Council

Name: **Lorna Phillips Forde**

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Elected Office You are Seeking: **Montgomery County Council At-Large**

Legislative District: **39**

Number of Years Lived in that District: **30**

Party Affiliation: **Democrat**

Relevant Non-governmental Professional Experience/Positions Held: **Owner of a missions and leisure travel company, which has given me a global perspective on the needs of diverse populations; finance and planning positions for a number of companies, including IBM, Getronics, University Research Co., LLC, LORAL Federal Systems, and WANG, through which I developed demonstrated experience in reviewing proposals and managing grants and contracts from \$4 million to \$30 million, developing pricing strategies for award winning cost proposals, supporting contract negotiation, and conducting financial analyses.**

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. **1) offer tax incentives to new and existing business owners, 2) work closely with business owners to help promote their products and services, 3) host entrepreneurial workshops, and 4) create mentoring programs for college students who are interested in starting their own business in and around the community.**
 - Please describe your plan for increasing the tax base – rather than tax rates – in the County. **I would increase the tax base by diversifying investments to spread the risk and increase opportunities.**
 - 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 support all of these options – more tax incentives and subsidies, particularly for small businesses seeking to relocate and for sustainability, and reasonably streamlining the development approval process. I also believe that we must look at the needs of the talent pool in order to attract businesses to Montgomery County. We need to attract talented employees to the area so that businesses relocating here have a talent pool from which to hire. This means that we must focus on affordable housing and initiatives to increase the efficiency and convenience of transportation in the county.**
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? **Yes**
 - Did you or would you have supported the 2016 recordation tax increase? **Yes**
 - 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? **I would reach out to large corporations and encourage them to open a facility in our area. Other ideas are offering career and employment training programs and partnering with local organizations to employ program participants.**
 - Would you support consolidation of some County Government functions in order to reduce costs? **No**
If so, please describe which programs or services you would recommend be consolidated, reduced, or eliminated.
 - 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? **Yes, I was supportive of the increase in the minimum wage and would have supported it had I been on the council.**
 - Did you or would you have supported mandatory sick leave, even for part-time employees? **Yes, I supported mandatory sick leave, even for part-time employees, and would have supported it had I been on the council.**
 - 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? **Yes**
 - What policy ideas do you have to enhance the success of our member job-creators? **As a small business owner/employer, I am interested in supporting the success of small businesses in Montgomery County, among others. I would work to provide information about incentives that provide critical funding options for small business sustainability in the county. I would also sponsor town hall discussions or other appropriate forums that would provide opportunities for small business owners/employers to learn about the financial, technical assistance, and training available for businesses in the county, as well as information about government contracting opportunities. The first critical step toward success is knowledge about support and resources that are available, so I would make it a priority to communicate this information to the small business community and to be responsive to questions arising as a result of such forums.**
 - 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**
 - Would you require that this analysis include interviews and discussions with actual business owners? **Yes**
 - Why or why not? **Sound decisions cannot be made without the participation of our constituents who are impacted by the decisions we make.**
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. **Large multinational corporations have financial backing but are less likely to build and maintain strong relationships with their customers. In turn, small and midsize businesses may lack the strong financial hold but are in a better position to build and maintain customer relationships.** Provide three specific examples of how you will support small businesses and ensure opportunities for them to grow and expand. **1) create a small business directory, 2) host small business events, and 3) promote small businesses through social media networks.**

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? **I will meet regularly with small business owners to assess their needs. I will work closely with the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation to ensure adequate resources and programs are available to assist small business owners to effectively advertise and promote their goods and services. I will explore (with an eye toward expanding) grant opportunities to stimulate small business development.**
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 will work to ensure that there is an adequate and effective public transit system for residents and business owners. I will support opportunities for transit-friendly communities that bring residents closer to shops, dining and business. I will work closely with WorkSource Montgomery to assess needs and resolve employment gaps (opportunities or resources) in our communities.**
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. **I believe that a mix of solutions is necessary to address the transportation issues in Montgomery County. These include dedicated funding for Metro and a ten-year plan for funding, the BRT to reduce traffic congestion and pollution, implementing best practices for good bikeway access to all Metro stations and elsewhere in the county, and possibly increasing the capacity of I-270, but I would first want to see detailed plans to assess the impact on business and the environment.**
 - How will you assure the future success of the Metro? **Improving Metro operations is a critical need for the success of business and the economy in the county, and I would support its increased funding by working to pass a ten-year funding plan.**
 - 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? **Any development in the county, including that related to new transit initiatives such as the Purple Line, requires open, honest, and respectful dialogue among businesses, residents, and the county government so that we can ensure that the impacts are no greater than necessary. My door would be open to hear the concerns of businesses that are so critical to Montgomery County's economy, and I would work in conjunction with businesses, residents, the developers, and other members of the council to find concrete ways to reduce any negative financial impact on businesses.**
9. What is your vision for the future of greater Silver Spring and Montgomery County over the next 5 years? **My vision is to increase the number of small businesses, make improvement to the infrastructure, bring more jobs to the community, and enhance public transportation.**
10. If elected, how will you measure your success at the end of your term? **I will rely on the feedback from my constituents and continue to monitor the growth and development of our communities.**