



GSSCC Candidate Questionnaire
Montgomery County Council – At-Large

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Elected Office You are Seeking: County Council At-Large
Legislative District: We live in District 20
Number of Years Lived in that District: 25 years
Party Affiliation: Democrat
Relevant Non-governmental Professional Experience/Positions Held:

I am a CPA licensed in Maryland and have worked as a consultant, assisting clients with issues relating to intellectual property monetization and valuation, for the past 20 years, the past 10 years as a business owner. I was a partner in a 65 person consulting firm (and was a member of the executive team) and then sold my practice to a 500 person consulting firm (taking 20 people with me in the sale). At the larger firm I have run the intellectual property practice and served as the geographic leader of the Mid-Atlantic region.

I have been very involved in the Silver Spring (and greater Montgomery County) community during the time we have lived here, serving as President of our neighborhood association (Woodmoor-Pinecrest Citizens Association) and serving in various leadership roles at our church (Silver Spring United Methodist) and PTAs at our childrens' schools (Pine Crest ES, Eastern MS, Wheaton HS, MCCPTA).

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. Develop a capital campaign to enhance funding for the MCEDC.
 2. Evaluate County policies through a regulatory reform effort modeled on, or similar to, the State of Maryland Regulatory Reform Commission.
 3. Launch a new countywide business awareness and promotion program to raise the profile of the business community and educate citizens about the importance of the private sector and the county's need for continued growth in the private sector.
 - Please describe your plan for increasing the tax base – rather than tax rates – in the County.

Montgomery County needs a real focus on growing the tax base, rather than just paying the concept lip service. I think the foundation has been laid for growth by forming the MCEDC and Worksource Montgomery, but we need to remember that these organizations are very young and will need constant attention in order to succeed. There are particular items from the Comprehensive Economic Strategy that I will focus on: 1) Development of workers in the skilled trades; 2) Engagement and dialogue between the business community and government/municipalities in order to improve the business climate overall; and

3) Consistent business attraction and retention efforts in particular targeted industries that are reflective of the strengths of Montgomery County.

We have to undertake these efforts due to the aging of our workforce and the known fact that many of the federal jobs that have provided this county a tax base that is immune to economic cycles will not be backfilled as employees retire (certainly not under the current administration, and maybe not ever). If we don't make the county more welcoming to the private sector, and if we don't go out and do the hard work of recruiting businesses, as well as lowering governmental barriers to entry, we suffer the consequences. Therefore, it is necessary to elect a businessperson on to Council, in order to drive an agenda that would meet these needs.

- 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)?

Tax incentives attract business and absolutely need to be used as a tool to do just that. I don't look at these forms of incentives as "corporate giveaways." Instead, I see them as a necessary element of bringing jobs to our jurisdiction, and these incentives can be structured to be paid only upon job creation. For example, Maryland has offered Amazon a 5.75% income tax credit where a portion of an employee's paycheck that would have gone to state income taxes is diverted back to Amazon. There is no tax credit given without the jobs being created, so the cost of the incentive is borne by the new tax revenue from the additional jobs.

As I have talked with businesspeople in Montgomery County I have heard terrible stories about how burdensome and time-consuming the development approval process is. I have even heard acknowledgement of this from the candidates who were term-limited off the County Council and are now running for County Executive. One example given by a biosciences professor at Montgomery College who is very active in job training and creation for his students is that it takes two years to obtain approval for a wet lab in Montgomery County. We can do much, much better than this. Such delays are a known threat to economic growth and we must do everything we can to eliminate them.

Again, I will be a Councilmember who is constantly thinking about ways to create jobs, help employers, and grow our tax base. I understand business and love thinking about ways to make businesses of all types more competitive and successful.

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.

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

No.

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

No.

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

Yes, I support the eventual phase out of the energy tax, which is levied disproportionately on commercial business.

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

I refer to my answers to Question 1 and reiterate that we no longer have the luxury of relying on large numbers of high-paying federal government jobs in order to maintain our tax base. Focus on business attraction in targeted sectors is the only way we can survive.

- e. 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.

I would eliminate the Department of Liquor Control. The county should not be in the business of selling liquor. I have talked to business owners who have to deal with the DLC and it truly a nightmare. This would result in \$21 million in compensation savings alone.

- f. 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.

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

I supported the longest phase-in to \$15/hour possible, which was suggested by County Executive Leggett.

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

No.

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

Yes.

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

No.

- k. What policy ideas do you have to enhance the success of our member job-creators?

A simple answer to this question is to continue and expand the Local Small Business Reserve Program, so that we can ensure certified local small businesses receive at least 20% of the County's procurements for goods, services and construction.

Eliminating the Department of Liquor Control will allow restaurant owners and other businesses selling alcohol to experience the desired and beneficial free market effects of competition in obtaining alcohol for resale to customers. I think that eliminating the DLC is the best signal we can send to the marketplace that Montgomery County is truly thinking differently about helping businesses succeed and also about giving citizens what they want (i.e. more choice).

- l. 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.
 - a. 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?
 - b. Would you require that this analysis include interviews and discussions with actual business owners?
 - c. Why or why not?

I would absolutely support such a law. Businesses have not been part of the dialogue in Montgomery County for far too long, and I would undertake the best practice of requiring that analysis of the fiscal economic impact on businesses and non-profits include interviews and discussions with actual business owners. We need to hear the viewpoint of business owners!

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.

There are tremendous differences between small / locally-owned businesses and multinational corporations. The main difference is that small businesses do not receive assistance, monetary or other (branding, advertising, R&D), from a parent organization, or headquarters, like a multinational does. Therefore, small businesses operate on a much smaller margin on a month to month basis and are far more exposed to interruptions from weather events, construction, and the like. They are also more likely to have heavier reliance on one or two large customers. But most importantly, local laws and regulations can have an outsized impact on small / locally-owned businesses, because for the reasons stated above, they do not have the safety net that a large corporate structure provides.

Here are three specific examples of how I will support small businesses and ensure opportunities for them to grow and expand: 1) I will complete an evaluation of County policies through a regulatory reform effort modeled on, or similar to, the State of Maryland Regulatory Reform Commission, and present recommendations for reform to the County Executive; 2) I will continue and expand the Local Small Business Reserve Program, so that we can ensure certified local small businesses receive at least 20% of the County's procurements for goods, services and construction; and 3) I will abolish the Department of Liquor Control so that restaurants, distributors and other businesses are no longer under the stranglehold of Montgomery County's control.

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?

See my answers to Questions #5, #7 and #9.

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?

We must involve the MCEDC in brokering a deal and push them to find a new employer/employers for the downtown Silver Spring area (and I know this is already occurring). Again, at its core, this is a marketing effort for our region more generally and Silver Spring in particular. I actually think Discovery's departure could be an opportunity, because the media sector is shrinking and Discovery will likely shrink further until the consolidation in the sector has shaken out.

At the same time, we must work to attract a strong life sciences to the East County Science Center, adjacent to the FDA. Failure to achieve either of these business recruiting goals would be absolutely fatal to any positive future prospects for Eastern Montgomery County.

These may seem like obvious goals, but they actually are not. We in the midst of undergoing a cultural shift with respect to economic development, and this shift will require that we continue to place focus on growth. The MCEDC is a fairly new organization, and will suffer without the proper care and feeding. As it is, the Comprehensive Economic Strategy acknowledges it has been purposefully developed to "allow for flexibility given MCEDCs nascent status." Currently, this document is 1.5 years old, and will soon have its 2nd birthday. It is time now to deliver on the strategies set forth by the document, particularly those relating to growth in Eastern Montgomery County.

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

Montgomery County always seems to be distracted by the newest, shiniest thing that comes down the pike. Currently that new, shiny thing seems to be a BRT network. Specific to the BRT on Route 29, however, we have forgotten that study after study over the last 40 years has found that a dedicated lane BRT system on Route 29 is not a good solution.

Therefore, if I am elected, I would undertake a review of all the transportation projects currently captured by Master Plans and rank the projects using a cost benefit analysis, so that we can perform an apples to apples comparison of 1) monetary cost, and 2) benefit to residents in terms of number of residents helped and improvements in time spent in transit, whether that be in a car or on public transit. Such a contemporaneous review would allow us to perform an apples to apples comparison of projects and then choose the projects that will provide the most benefit. Under the status quo, we always seem to be comparing (for example) ridership numbers from 7 years ago to projected ridership numbers from 3 years ago, and the like. Only a thorough review of all the competing projects will allow us to decide, once and for all, how to proceed.

At the end of this process we can eliminate projects referred to as "Zombie projects" by the current Council – those projects that will never be built but remain on the Master Plans for one reason or another.

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

Metro must have dedicated, bondable funding, combined with governance reforms, in order to remain viable in the long term. I will do everything I can as a Councilmember to advocate for both, and ensure that the state of Maryland enters into an agreement with Virginia and DC to provide this dedicated funding.

- c. 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 support Senator Smith's proposal to enable businesses to apply for bridge grants through a neighborhood business development program for losses attributed to Purple Line construction. This is similar to what Montgomery County is doing for businesses affected by the Wheaton redevelopment project. The State and County should consider temporary property tax abatement for affected properties during construction.

I also support initiatives like County Executive Leggett's Long Branch Town Center Redevelopment, which would help Long Branch businesses impacted by Purple Line construction with marketing and technical assistance.

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

For greater Silver Spring, we need to push to attract private sector jobs and work to transition the Discovery Building to another owner. If we do not undertake these efforts now, Silver Spring could slide back into being the veritable ghost town that it was when my husband and I moved here 25 years ago to work at NOAA. I also want to attract a strong private sector employer in the health sciences to the East County Science Center, adjacent to the FDA. These efforts will go a long way towards ensuring greater Silver Spring continues to be a great place to live.

For Montgomery County, my overarching vision is to obtain private sector job growth that will allow us to continue providing excellent services to residents as we have done for many years. Without this focus and growth on the tax revenue side of the equation, we will, each year, face a substantial budget shortfall that will force us to make difficult decisions about cutting services. Such decisions always have the most negative impact on MCPS, because it is the largest line item in the budget and is therefore asked to bear its "fair share" of budget cuts. We know the tax base is definitely going to shrink due to the aging of our population, therefore we must focus on replacing these jobs, streamlining processes, and cutting regulations in order to keep Montgomery County a great place to live, and also ensure it is a great place to do business.

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

I will consider my term a success if I have done the following things by the end of the term:

1. Have a plan in place to abolish the Department of Liquor Control and privatize liquor distribution by 2025.
2. Complete an evaluation of County policies through a regulatory reform effort modeled on, or similar to, the State of Maryland Regulatory Reform Commission, and present recommendations for reform to the County Executive.
3. Sign a deal with a business / businesses as successor to Discovery / anchor tenant in Silver Spring
4. Put capital funding program in place for the MCEDC