



GSSCC Candidate Questionnaire
Montgomery County Executive

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Elected Office You are Seeking: County Executive
Legislative District: N/A
Number of Years Lived in that District: N/A
Party Affiliation: Democrat
Relevant Non-governmental Professional Experience/Positions Held: **Small business owner for 15 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.
 - Please describe your plan for increasing the tax base – rather than tax rates – in the County.

We must grow our tax base which means creating more jobs. And we won't see more jobs without attracting new companies to our county. We can make that a reality by implementing a number of strategies: 1) Ensure that MCEDC meets its potential and is one of the strongest economic development corporations in the country. Ensure MCEDC has all the resources it needs to get there; 2) Maintain a world-class public education system – part of the quality of life companies look for when relocating; 3) Developing transit oriented urban nodes that are attractive to millennials, seniors, and companies seeking a new home; 4) continue to offer incentives to targeted industries to ensure companies prosper here in Montgomery County; 5) Double down strategically on our work force training efforts; 6) ensuring the metro system has the resources it needs to provide safe, reliable transit mobility throughout the region; and 6) Support the success of existing businesses in the county by partnering with the business community rather than throwing up obstacles to success.

The future of the economy is innovation. Amazon, Google, Apple, MedImmune, Wedding Wire. Autonomous cars will be here before we know it; artificial intelligence is changing everything. We need to position ourselves for that world. That we are on Amazon's short list speaks volumes for the assets we have in place – our highly educated workforce, our quality of life, our proximity to the nation's

capital, our commitment to developing vibrant urban nodes around transit to name a few. Yet we can and must do more. We must create a culture of innovation and ensure that we have a “talent pipeline” of young people from diverse backgrounds who understand STEM and technology. I will be a County Executive that fosters this sort of culture so many companies are seeking.

Some of the Initiatives/Legislation I have supported during my tenure:

- Voted for 15 new master plans allowing for new commercial and residential growth in order to be poised for the future and create transit oriented urban nodes.
 - Strongly supported the Purple Line – the first D1 councilmember to do so
 - Strong supporter of BRT network to increase mobility in the county and ease congestion
 - Created the Office of Innovation to help change the culture of our county govt.
 - Created the small business navigator position to provide assistance to our county’s business owners
 - Created the Business Solutions Group - to augment the work of the small business navigator & provide resource to communicate effectively with the business community
 - Supporter of biotech tax credits
 - Supporter of tax credits for LEED construction
 - Strongly advocated for a new, independent, economic development corporation
 - Establishment of a Green Bank – to provide a wide array of financing programs to help property owners save money on their energy bills, and support the Green Economy generally
 - Solar tax credits
 - Created a microloan program to provide seed money for entrepreneurs
 - Created Commercial Pace program to help commercial property owners make needed building repairs in and energy efficient manner
 - Lead sponsor of adding minor master plan process to make our planning process more nimble
 - Preserved existing parking rates as desired by your Chamber of Commerce members
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- 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)?

This continues my answer. At the same time, we need to make it easy for businesses to thrive here. We haven’t done that as well as I would like to see. We need to change the perceptionand the reality ...that Montgomery

County is not always an easy place to open and run a business. I am committed to a top to bottom review of our processes, like those at DPS, to ensure that we are serving our constituents well. I will insist on a culture of “yes”, where customer service is prioritized.

We often say in Montgomery County that small business is big business but we don't always act in a way that is consistent with that mantra. I take pride in the fact that I do. Perhaps it is because I owned a small business for longer than I have been in public service. As the lead sponsor on legislation that created the Small Business Navigator and the Business Solutions Group, I helped efforts to put back in county government, important supportive services for our small business community. I have also had supported small businesses when it comes to the impact of major legislative initiatives that impact them -- including the recent minimum wage debate and sick leave legislation.

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. The money was needed to meet the ever-increasing demands of our school system, which is one of the best means the County has to attract and retain business. Investments in schools is an investment in our growth. Funding appropriated helped reduce class sizes and supported programming to help close the achievement gap in order to ensure all kids graduating from MCPS are ready for college and the work force.

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

Yes. It was part of a deliberate effort to increase revenues available for school capacity expansion projects. I supported it. Addressing school overcrowding has been a top priority of mine. I have not seen any evidence that shows that the increase has had a significant negative impact on our real estate community.

There is no disputing that too many of our schools are facing capacity challenges. While some of this is due to turnover of existing homes and new families moving to the county, new development also contributes to the enrollment growth we have been seeing. Given the number of new master plans approved during my time on the Council, many residents are getting increasingly concerned about these impacts to the schools and the reality is that there is not enough construction funding coming from the state. The list of capacity needs in schools across the county is daunting and we need to do

everything we can to address them so that our schools are providing high quality learning environments for our students.

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

This tax was introduced by the County Executive in the depths of the recession, late in the budgeting process. It was intended to be temporary. Along with a few of my colleagues, I led the fight for three years to reduce it (by 30% of the increase). However, the majority of my colleagues were not interested in reducing or eliminating the energy tax if it meant reducing services for residents.

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

We need to do several things. The County must be more business-friendly, particularly to small business. We must be more forward-looking. My goal is to make Montgomery County an "innovation hub". Cutting edge is certainly not our reputation today. This goal was what prompted me to create in county government the Office of Innovation, which I hope to expand. I want to change the conversation about Montgomery County by creating a more dynamic environment that draws entrepreneurs. It was what led me to persuade Tien Wong to bring his successful "CONNECTpreneur Program" to Bethesda. We need to concentrate more on building a green economy, which creates jobs for the future while decreasing our output of greenhouse gases. We must streamline our government processes and we must privatize our Department of Liquor Control. I will be a County Executive that goes to Google and suggests that they test autonomous vehicles here.

- 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.

The County government, excluding our schools, is a \$2.5 billion enterprise. I believe that through a top-to-bottom review of our budget, we will discover opportunities for consolidation and innovation that could be undertaken without harm to the people those programs are designed to serve. I have been an advocate for zero-based budgeting and I will pursue efficiencies whenever possible. I was the lead sponsor in creating the Organizational Reform Commission, which sought to identify ways to achieve a more efficient county government.

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 originally opposed the increase to \$15 because I had any concerns about the impacts to our small business in the county given the proposed implementation pace. Knowing that the bill had 5 co-sponsors, I worked very closely with representatives from all the Chambers to put forth alternative proposals that would be less impactful on businesses. In the end, I supported the Council's decision to increase the minimum wage to \$15 but on a longer implementation schedule than 2020. I was instrumental in forging a compromise that attempted to reconcile the needs of our small business community and our workers, or depending on your view of this issue, at a minimum, mitigate some of the impacts. Like so many other pieces of legislation that have come before me, I have always been committed to working with county chamber representatives to ensure their voices were heard, respected and that as many concerns of the business community as possible were addressed during the legislative process.

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

As described above, knowing there was broad support for this legislation at the council, I brought all stakeholders together to find some common ground on the amendments sought by the chambers. Together we were able to make some important changes to the bill that addressed some of the concerns of the business community and lessen the impacts. I think I have proven that I can and have been a good partner with the county's chambers like the Silver Spring Chamber. My door is always open, I listen carefully and then take action to be responsive to concerns, requests, etc.

- Do you support an employer's right to hire and schedule its employees according to its individual needs? Do you support legislation that dictates minimum work hours or scheduling requirements?

I do support an employer's right to hire and schedule its employees according to its individual needs. I do not support legislation that dictates minimum work hours or scheduling requirements.

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

Many of my ideas were detailed above in the descriptions of how to grow our economy. Your member job-creators would benefit from a County

government that streamlines processes, puts an emphasis on innovation and attracts and nurtures businesses that create a more vibrant business and residential climate for Montgomery County.

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?

Despite support for this from the chambers, I do not believe such a law is needed. The Council and the Executive routinely consider the economic impact of new laws and legislation on our business community. Throughout my career, I have made it a point to make certain those views were included in discussions and that legislation was adjusted accordingly. We hear from business owners and non-profit executives in the course of formal testimony and comments and in informal meetings. That said, some decision makers will pay closer attention to the economic impacts than others. I don't believe a written analysis would move the needle in this regard. A majority of the Council voting to NOT do more economic impact analysis of the minimum wage bill (which I strongly supported) is testimony to this dynamic. You should also be aware that our Council staff believes that such an analysis is beyond their capabilities in anything close to a timely manner.

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

See my answer directly above. I believe it is the responsibility of every elected official to listen to all our county's stakeholders when considering legislation or new initiatives. That is the way I have gone about my business. But I cannot control how other officials go about theirs.

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.

As I mentioned above, I have been a champion of small business in my time on the County Council. I have made certain that major changes in law or regulation, such as the recent \$15 minimum wage and the sick & safe leave act, would acknowledge and accommodate the unique challenges to small businesses. As I mentioned, I also sponsored the creation of government programs to help small businesses get started and navigate through the County processes. I will continue to support those types of programs and expand on them as County Executive. Most importantly, I very much

appreciate the contributions of our small businesses to our county and would foster a culture of respect and appreciation across departments/agencies. My administration would be your partner, not your opponent or obstacle. And I will have a special assistant that focuses on your needs.

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?

We can work through the zoning process and other inducements to attract business to Silver Spring. The fact that Discovery moved from Bethesda to Silver Spring was an indication that the area is attractive. The company's departure was less a reflection on us than on the current business climate of mergers and the company executives' desire to have the headquarters near his home in New York. If we are successful in bringing Amazon to Montgomery County, Silver Spring could benefit by its presence.

I am open to your suggestions on what needs to happen to make Silver Spring a more dynamic commercial center. It is not healthy for Bethesda to be the only commercial success story. And there is no reason, given the transit options, diverse community, and proximity to both FDA and the nation's capitol, why we can't make Silver Spring pop. It will be a major focus on mine.

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?

The White Oak Master plan will be a big player in the future of the 29 corridor, providing numerous opportunities for growth, public amenities, and jobs. It may also be time to review and update the Silver Spring Master Plan to ensure the area is poised for a prosperous, vibrant future. Bus Rapid Transit service along the Route 29 corridor will also help create mobility options for people getting to home and work, and I believe we should look very carefully at implementing reversible lanes to mitigate rush hour traffic. This would not be an expensive initiative but could make a big impact.

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 have continually said that fixing Metro must be our first option. And I am proud of the role I played as Chair of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) in laying the foundation for the successful regional push to get dedicated funding for Metro. A huge deal for our county and for our region.

We must work to implement a world-class BRT network to increase mobility options. If we have the Purple Line (and I am the first District Councilmember to support it), BRT, a well run Metro, we have the bones for a world class transit system. That is what we need to attract businesses.

At the same time, no one has pushed harder to ease congestion on 270 all the way to the American Legion Bridge. I even started a petition “fix the bridge”; I led Fairfax and Montgomery County, working together, to call for fixing the bridge, and now the Governor has an ambitious plan to address congestion in our area. I will work with our Governor to make that plan right for Montgomery County and our residents.

I also believe we must fully utilize our existing right-of-ways to the maximum extent possible – using reversible lanes during peak periods and implemented state of the art traffic signals that can reduce travel times by 15%. Ample parking must exist for all users of the downtown, but we must consider our parking policies very carefully in order to not inadvertently encourage more congestion. And we must adapt our parking strategies to the rapidly changing world and new technologies when they roll out such as autonomous vehicles. Such advances could have dramatic impacts on our county’s approaches and polices and we must be ready to be nimble and adapt to change.

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

I have worked hard at the County level, with colleagues at the State level, and at the regional level through my work at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) to come up with a regional approach to dedicated funding for Metro. I believe my leadership on this issue and my efforts to bring regional leaders together to seek collaborative solutions, along with the advocacy of many stakeholder groups, the hard work of Delegate Korman and Senator Feldman, helped bring about the dedicated funding scenario playing out right now. Metro is the economic spine of our region and it failing is simply not an option. My work on this project has earned me the support of regional leaders from Fairfax, Arlington, Prince George’s County, and the District.

- 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?

Working with MTA and the Purple Line Transit Partners, we will do everything we can to minimize disruption and support those businesses impacted negatively with programs like the Impact Assistance Fund. I have encouraged members of our delegation to introduce measures to do the same at the state level. People like Judy Stephenson, who filled the position of Small Business Navigator I created, will continue to monitor the situation and reach out to business owners and serve as an effective liaison in this area. She has earned the respect of many in the business community and is doing great work.

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

I want to see a thriving County and a Silver Spring that is seen as a beacon of innovation, an attractive place for businesses and their employees with the services, amenities and quality of life (both during the day and at night) that creates an economy that benefits everyone – those that work there, those that live there, and those that visit. We must fill the office space previously occupied by Discovery, support the health of the PLD, ensure the Purple Line is built out with the least impacts on small businesses as possible, continue to invest in the circulator and arts and entertainment endeavors in the downtown.

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

I will measure it by the progress made toward attaining the vision outlined above. And to the extent possible, I will create metrics by which our success can be measured.