



GSSCC Questionnaire
Montgomery County Council Candidates

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Council District for Which You Are Seeking Election: 6

Number of Years Lived in that District: 30

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Relevant Non-governmental Professional Experience/Positions Held: _____

Please insert your answers after each question below, or answer using a separate document. Please return the completed questionnaire to jredicker@gsscc.org no later than close of business on Friday, March 4

1. Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic affected our lives and our economy in unprecedented ways. The County provided financial assistance to help businesses through these unprecedented times, but many businesses and employers have still not recovered.

- What are you prepared to do to get businesses and our economy back to a sense of normal?

Covid will be with us in some form or another for many years. But businesses and our economy have to live with it and continue to operate. Hopefully with vaccines and immunity we will be able to avoid future outbreaks and businesses can operate semi-normally again.

- What will you do to support business should the COVID pandemic remain with us?

There are several federal, state, and local resources available to assist and support businesses. Organizations like GSSCC and other chamber of commerces, etc. also support businesses with sharing access to resources. Also we need to simplify regulations and costs for small businesses. Many businesses were hampered by these problems before Covid so that just made their problems even worse.

- What kind of financial support (grants and loans) will you support to help businesses and nonprofit organizations (i.e. commercial rent support, reimbursement for testing kits, grants to support continued telework)?

Although many Montgomery County resources have run dry, several state and federal resources are still available for small businesses and nonprofits. Applications are still open and loans/grants are still being awarded.

2. The Silver Spring Central Business District was envisioned to become a smart-growth, live, work, and play community. However, in the past 10-plus years, Silver Spring has evolved into a primarily residential neighborhood

(bedroom community), with virtually no commercial office development. At this point, the County seems to be focused on just the “live” and “play” aspects. But 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 employers and jobs back to Silver Spring?

Every city is facing the challenge of a workforce that has many members now working from home. Montgomery County had a lot of office space unused before Covid, and it has only gotten worse. But that doesn't mean that downtown Silver Spring can't still prosper. Small businesses can still succeed if since there are still many people who live and work in downtown Silver Spring.

- What will you do to revitalize our daytime economy in Silver Spring?

We need to recruit large and small businesses to Silver Spring. Government, private sector, and nonprofits can all succeed there. Although they are now gone, large headquarters like the Discovery Channel building was there for a long time.

3. The Planning Board's Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan's sole answer to reviving and expanding Silver Spring's office market is to simply “improve the public realm (i.e., build more sidewalks, bikeways, parks, etc.). Please explain why you agree or disagree that this is an effective and appropriate strategy for returning economic prosperity to the downtown Silver Spring business district?

Bikeable and walkable is great for a downtown area like Silver Spring, but it doesn't help if you have fewer destinations to go. Improving the public realm has to go hand in hand with bringing in new businesses.

4. In recent months, Silver Spring has experienced a dramatic increase in violent crime, which threatens our economy, our business owners, and our residents. The expansion of our “nighttime economy” has been accompanied by some unintended consequences. Two recent surveys show that the top concern of most residents is crime and safety.
 - Will you support bringing either a police substation or creating a new district police station in downtown Silver Spring? Why or why not?

Yes, I would support a police substation or a new district station. We only have six stations in the whole county. It would make sense to have one in downtown Silver Spring.

- Would you support legislation that requires a set closing time for restaurants operating as bars and nightclubs as well as hookah bars (as is done in Prince George's County and D.C.)? Why or why not?

Public Safety should always be a top priority. If the data suggests that a set closing time would reduce crime then I'd support it.

5. 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.

Business growth and economic development are one of my top priorities. We need to simplify the permitting process for small businesses to allow them to succeed here and it would allow more businesses to come to Montgomery County. We need incentives to make companies want to operate here as well.

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

With economic development and growth, we'd also bring in more high paying jobs to Montgomery County. The simplification of permitting would also increase the tax base.

- 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)?

People want to live and businesses want to operate in cities and counties that have great schools, safe neighborhoods, and great transportation. With investments in infrastructure and keeping the high standard that Montgomery County has always been known for, we can bring in more businesses who will want to operate here.

6. Many of our small- and medium-sized business members feel that the policies adopted 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. (For example, the County requires small business owners to pay a recordation tax when they use their personal home as collateral for a business loan that is more than \$3 million. Yet large business owners don't have to personally guarantee anything, let alone put their personal property at risk for access to capital.) Please provide three specific examples of how you will support small businesses and ensure opportunities for them to grow and expand.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of most communities and Montgomery County is no different. But we also should be looking to attract more large companies. We missed out on Amazon and we lost the Discovery Channel headquarters, so there is room for improvement.

1. As mentioned above, we need to simplify costs and permitting processes for small businesses.
 2. We have several large malls in Montgomery County that are completely unused (White Flint, Lakeforest, and the old Burtonsville shopping center). All of these areas need development and could be great locations for many new small businesses.
 3. Continue to work with state, federal, and local resources on loans/grants for small businesses
7. The Route 29 Corridor in Eastern Montgomery County has suffered from a lack of commercial and other development for many years. Few, if any new employment opportunities have been created to provide jobs that would address complaints about traffic congestion (that is taking employees to Silver Spring or D.C.) or bring economic prosperity to this area. What are you going to do to ensure economic development that brings new businesses and jobs to the East County/Rt. 29 Corridor?

The Viva White Oak project is certainly a great start to grow East County. This will bring new retail, commercial, housing, etc. to the community. Bus Rapid Transit has also helped East County. And as I mentioned above, the old Burtonsville mall that has sat vacant for years needs development.

8. The Chamber supports a balanced approach to transportation policies that takes 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.
 - What is your proposal to balance this equation -roads, trains, buses, roads, parking garages? Need all to get people to work?
 - What will you do to address the needs and concerns of businesses that expect to be harmed financially during the continued construction of The Purple Line?

We have taken great strides in transportation in Silver Spring with Bus Rapid Transit, repaving of roads, and the building of many parking garages in downtown. Expansion of MARC service will also help. The Purple Line construction has hurt many businesses. We do have a relief fund set up for these businesses that have been negatively impacted. We need to continue that.

9. In 2019, the Council passed legislation to require an Economic Impact analysis to determine a proposed bill's potential positive or negative effects, if any, on the County's workforce, taxation policy, property values, incomes, operating costs to businesses and non-profits operating in the County, capital investment from the private sector,

economic development, and the County's competitiveness. The Chamber believes that this effort has not always focused sufficiently on impacts to existing businesses and the economy as a whole.

- Would you require that this analysis include interviews and discussions with actual business owners? Why or why not?
- Would you require this analysis to include formal input from the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation? Why or why not?
- Would you require this analysis to include formal input from the County Chamber of Commerce, and the individual area Chambers (rather than just the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation? Why or why not?

Yes, understanding the economic impact of a proposed bill absolutely makes sense. Knowing how legislation works in reality not just in theory is how policy should be made. Yes, actual businesses owners should be consulted, and input from organizations like GSSCC and MCEDC are of vital importance.

10. What is your vision for the future of greater Silver Spring and Montgomery County, and what is needed to accomplish this vision, over the next 5 years?

Silver Spring's growth and success is vital to the future of our county. We need to continue to make it a place that is attractive to new businesses both large and small, as well as an area with great schools and safe neighborhoods.