



GSSCC Questionnaire
Montgomery County Council Candidates

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Council District for Which You Are Seeking Election: 4 _____

Number of Years Lived in that District: 3 _____

Party Affiliation: Democrat _____

Relevant Non-governmental Professional Experience/Positions Held: _____

career server/bartender/manager in the DMV area _____

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

- 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?
From the perspective of a worker in the county, it has been heartening to see the high vaccination rates and rapidly falling COVID positivity rates lead to a gradual return of interest in coming out and dining/drinking. If we get cash assistance to the individuals who need it most, we should see an increase in money spent in the community. At the same time, the messaging from the county needs to be consistent and encouraging.
 - What will you do to support business should the COVID pandemic remain with us?
It looks like some version of the virus will be with us for quite some time. Grant money can help businesses deal with rising costs and keep staff employed.
 - 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)? Rent support is critical for struggling businesses to survive

- 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? A lot of the small businesses that have left the area recently have felt priced out. I want to look into commercial rent caps and other methods of controlling the cost of doing business in Silver Spring.
 - What will you do to revitalize our daytime economy in Silver Spring? This question is personal to me; as a server and bartender, I would love to have lunchtime business and it just isn't there currently. Part of this involves

constituent services; there are grant programs out there to help businesses open, but those systems can be difficult to navigate. I want to facilitate the obtaining of any financial aid possible for businesses to open and prosper.

- 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? While not a be-all-and-end-all solution, walkable communities are shoppable communities. I've worked in enough locations that were not exactly accessible to understand the difficulty in sustaining a business that no one knows exists because they can't get to it.
- 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? I do not believe increased police presence is the solution to any societal ill.
 - 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? No. I would rather see our nightlife scene make us a destination than place more crippling restrictions on businesses.
- 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. I support the BID as a great way for the people impacted in the decisions made at the county level, especially our small business owners, to have a say in how we grow as a community.
 - Please describe your plan for increasing the tax base – rather than tax rates – in the County. Our tax base increases if we allow more people to live and work in the area. More affordable housing makes that a realistic goal. Ideas like the Thrive plan can help us adjust to population growth and increase our 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)? The businesses in this area frequently talk about the hoops they have to jump through just to open and operate. I am totally in favor of streamlining the approval process.
- 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 business owners shouldn't be charged to put their own property up as collateral, especially when they're paying for a button to be pushed and not for any actual work.
 - Remove the requirement to have a licensed architect for retail renovations performed by a licensed contractor. This is an example of short-sighted "one size fits all" legislation, as retail renovations don't involve changes to architecture, so we're just adding barriers where they do not belong.
 - Keep the tipped wage credit in Montgomery County. I approach this as a server/bartender, aware that if my tips do not equal the minimum wage, I still make the minimum wage. If we're going after places that are guilty of wage theft, let's do that and not punish businesses that are doing things the right way.
- 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? This goes back to the "one size fits all" approach to legislation and how it can hurt small businesses in favor of large corporations. Cost of opening and operating

(including rent) should be adjusted to less affluent areas. Additionally, multi-use zoning would allow different types of businesses to operate in one area, potentially putting housing above stores or offices, and building communities where people can live and work in the same area.

- 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. If people are able to commute to work easily via bike, metro, bus, or walking we will see less traffic congestion. The options just aren't there for everyone because bicycling is dangerous without dedicated lanes, walking is deadly without sidewalks, and public transit can be unreliable. BRT with dedicated lanes and safety precautions for citizens who bike or walk will result in fewer cars on the road and more efficient commutes for everyone.
 - What is your proposal to balance this equation -roads, trains, buses, roads, parking garages? Need all to get people to work? Keep the RideOn free, more housing near transit, watch congestion decrease.
 - 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? Grants are a good idea to help businesses during construction; in addition, we need to make sure these businesses remain accessible during and after construction.
- 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? This sounds like a no-brainer. Legislation should be crafted with input from the people who will be impacted by it.
 - Would you require this analysis to include formal input from the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation? Why or why not? The MCEDC has shown itself to be good at data collection and analysis; I can't see a case against including their input.
 - 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? Again, I cannot for the life of me see why we wouldn't solicit input from as many places as possible when crafting legislation. I would make sure feedback is requested and collected expeditiously to avoid "paralysis by analysis" but I don't think that's too tall an order.
- 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? My vision is to have a community (both in Silver Spring and the county as a whole) where everyone can afford to live, work, and enjoy life. I would like to help build a society that works for everyone. For that to be a reality, we need more affordable housing (and an honest assessment of what we call affordable) and adequate social services for those of us with the most needs, including people with disabilities, experiencing homelessness, struggling with addiction, or incarcerated. We have to invest in the community by fully funding organizations like the Housing Opportunities Commission with the goal in mind of eradicating homelessness in the county. I don't know how long that will take, but in five years we can make substantial progress.