

T H E C H A M B E R

GREATER TALLAHASSEE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BUSINESS STRONG. MEMBER DRIVEN.

2020 LOCAL CANDIDATE GUIDE



Cascades Park - Aerial Tallahassee C/O
North American Properties

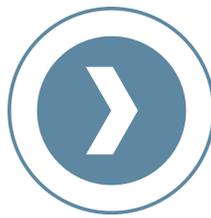


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Dear Chamber Member,

Local elections are an incredibly important part of our democracy. Local governments are the closest governments to the people and the impact they have on creating a thriving business environment is substantial. Our right to vote is sacred and we all have a duty to make a choice for the leaders we want to see represent us in local government.

This year, we have a chance to select leaders who will be tasked with making major decisions about how our community moves forward. With so many pressing issues facing businesses today, it's critical that we have elected officials who want to see our community grow and thrive. That's why our Chamber has once again surveyed the candidates who are seeking office this year and compiled their positions for your review.

In the pages that follow, you'll find an opportunity to review the beliefs, positions, and priorities of candidates who are on the ballot in both the primary and general elections this year. We have included the races for the Leon County Commission, City of Tallahassee Commission, Leon County School Board, and Leon County Superintendent of Schools. Each candidate for these offices was invited to answer a series of questions which were based on the Chamber's Guiding Principles and Position Statements. We are proud to present their answers to those questions as a means for helping you choose who to support with your vote.

We hope that by consulting this guide you will be able to make more informed decisions when filling out your ballot this year. Regardless of which candidates you select, we hope you choose to cast your vote and encourage you friends, family, and colleagues to do the same.

This year's primary election will be held on August eighteenth followed by the general election on November third. With so many uncertainties associated with the pandemic we are all experiencing, it is important to develop your voting plan now. Getting to know where the candidates stand is a great place to start.

Thanks for your support of the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce. We appreciate your engagement in our community and are glad to have you as a business minded voter.

See you at the polls,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Revell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Jay Revell
Vice President
Advocacy & Public Policy



Leon County Commission District 4

- **Brian Welch**
- **Bryan Desloge**

Brian Welch

bwelch7897@yahoo.com

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

Brian Welch, Candidate for Leon County Commission District 4. I want to give a voice to the residents of NE Tallahassee who desperately need an advocate on the Leon County Commission. I want to make sure that our NE families and neighborhoods have someone in local government that represents their interests and protects their quality of life.

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

I would work with the Chamber, the OEV and in our City and School Board to identify creative ways to incentivize business development, either through funding mechanisms such as partnerships with local bankers or less restrictive regulatory pathways.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

I would invest, where possible, in a revitalization of the restaurant and hospitality industry. I would support further Blueprint expenditures targeted at that industry.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

1. Giving NE residents an advocate on the County Commission.
2. Ensuring that NE growth brings the necessary infrastructure with it and protects resident's quality of life.
3. Support the creation of a CSC to address economic and educational segregation, poverty and crime across the County.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

That Tallahassee be united as a community and that all corners of the County share a common sense of place, prosperity and purpose.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

I fully support the creation of a CSC and think it will serve to fill many gaps and provide better outcomes across the issues of poverty, education and crime. Local government needs to also commit to encouraging growth and investment in all parts of the community. We need to make strategic investments in the areas we know need help. Those investments should include housing, economic development, employment training, etc.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

I would support further and increased funding to the office of the MWSBE as well as meaningful efforts to invest in and recruit these types of businesses to the community.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

I think we need to invest in programming at Lively to encourage more trades and CTE training. Partnerships with our colleges and universities as a way to be conduits between the needs of the business community and the programs being offered.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

I fully support the creation of the CSC and have since I learned about it.

Bryan Desloge

desloge.bryan@gmail.com

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

Bryan Desloge - County Commission District 4 - I'm running because I feel this is the best way I can continue to serve my community. - I have an extensive background in business, nonprofit and government serving in local government is my way of giving back to the community that I love

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

As a small business owner for many years and past chairman of the chamber, I know firsthand how much small business relies on local government for vision, fair taxes, and services. When I started as a Commissioner in 2006, the County had a proposed budget of \$290 million. Fourteen years later we have a smaller budget (\$280M) and approximately 100 less employees than we did when I started. By applying business practices to government I've helped make our government more efficient, streamlined services, and worked with permitting and code compliance to be more responsive and improve customer service. Until you sign the front of a paycheck it's hard to understand the day to day struggles small businesses face. Having been there I can appreciate what the chamber has done and continues to do for our community.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

Following the shutdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, I, as County Chairman, called the special meeting of the intergovernmental agency (Blueprint) that created the grant program to help our small businesses, economy, and residents. The small business grants fund we created was done with hyper responsiveness - we designed the program, approved the program, and awarded \$1 million to small business in a two-week time period. I believe my business background helped me recognize the urgency of the moment and how important it was to support our businesses as they struggle to keep people employed and to support our residents so that they can continue keeping our local economy stimulated. We also did the same thing for our local non-profits and our model has been repeated around the state and country. Now with more than \$50 million in CARES funding from the federal government we hope to take that experience and continue to help small businesses in our community keep their heads above water. But this pandemic has required a team effort, and I have been and will continue to work with all of the chambers, the faith-based community, law enforcement and the health care community to make sure we get through this safely and stronger than ever.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

My top three goals as a candidate are as follows: (1) Continue to work collaboratively to see us through the COVID-19 pandemic. Sadly, I think there is still much to do and the future changes quickly. We have to remain agile and responsive and always endeavor to pull together as a community. (2) Diversify our economy. The Office of Economic Vitality (OEV) administers a funding source that will help drive our

private sector around the important innovations taking place at our universities. Similarly, we need to utilize the partnership we have with the State. As our biggest employer we have to come to terms with their importance in our community and find ways to collaborate on economic development projects that will help us grow. (3) Manage our growth. I've spent most of my time as commissioner trying to correct the wrongs of growth. For too long the NE was allowed to happen organically and we continue to play clean up after the fact. Roads, stormwater, sewer, sidewalks were all inadequate and it's only now that we've begun to catch up. Making sure we have the infrastructure in place, and we plan accordingly will ensure that the next generation of leaders isn't playing from behind. Welaunee will be only the third development in our community to be master planned (Southwood & Canopy) and it's about time we plan for our future growth rather than let it happen to us.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

My vision for the future of Tallahassee is that it will continue to grow as a dynamic, young, well-educated community by working together and embracing the technology and brainpower offered at the three higher education institutions, that we promote and highlight our trails and unique ecosystem to draw people from all over the world to visit us and, ultimately, increase the tourism economic impact from \$1 billion to \$2 billion per year.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

We have a great catalyst in our community with Blueprint and OEV. Over the years every project built with public Blueprint dollars has been followed by significant private investment – Gaines Street, Cascades Park & Thomasville Road widening to name just a few. The next 20 years of Blueprint projects are primarily focused on the southside of town, south of Tennessee street. This is a part of our community that has been neglected for too long and these public infrastructure projects not only provide us necessary roads, parks, sidewalks and trails but they also provide employment opportunities.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

At this moment in time it's particularly important to acknowledge that we need to do better on this. Within the Office of Economic Vitality, we have created several programs to help support and foster minority and women-owned business with workforce training and entrepreneurial education. In addition, we have increased our focus on minority participation in government projects as well as helped incentivize local businesses who wish to also do business with local government. As one of the original founders of The Village Square, I think it's important to have frank and open conversations on the things we need to improve upon as a community. I'm proud of the annual Village Square event does called Local Color, which is a Gathering Across Color, Creed & Ideology. These are opportunities to continue to discuss and improve where we stand on this issue.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

The flight of the creative class is a real problem for our community. I was on the original KCCI catalyst group that discussed this problem and we continue to discuss how we maintain the talent pipeline. Our

universities and colleges provide us with a broad and skilled workforce. For me this issue comes back to how we grow and diversify our economy. If we can foster an environment for new businesses and help our existing businesses grow, they will be hiring more people as they graduate from our colleges and universities. Expanding opportunities and creating great public spaces like Cascades Park, Midtown, and Market Street so that there are high-paying jobs available to students as they graduate to incentivize them to stay in Tallahassee.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

I support the creation of a Children's Services Council in Leon County, but I do have some hesitation over establishing a new taxing authority. Early on in the process I went to Miami and met with David Lawrence – the head of the Dade CSC and the original architect of the enabling state legislation – to get a firsthand account of how the oversight has worked there. It was my opinion that the proponents of the Leon County CSC had not spent enough time evaluating who would be served by and how the CSC would be accountable to the voters, so I pushed for the delay that resulted in it being on the 2020 ballot. A committee was established to do such a deep dive and there is little doubt that many in our community are struggling. Additionally, the Tallahassee Chamber did an exhaustive analysis of the problems many in our community are facing. I applaud the community coming together and fostering such a frank discussion and think that the investment in the CSC will pay us dividends in years to come.



Leon County Commission At-Large Group 1

- **Melissa Villar**
- **Jeff Hendry**
- **Scott Flowers**
- **Danielle Irwin**
- **Kelly Otte**
- **Robin Colson**
- **Carolyn Cummings**

Melissa Villar

Melissavillar4@gmail.com

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

Melissa Villar, Leon Board of County Commissioners At Large Group 1, I decided to run because I felt the community at large was underrepresented.

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

Our team has opened avenues for economic development and community reinvestment. The nonprofits I founded, The Holistic Cannabis Community and NORML Tallahassee, have brought equity to the cannabis industry in Florida particularly for small farmers and small business entrance by advocating for a no [\$0] hemp cultivation permit fee for 2020.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

1) Economic monthly stimulus (Universal Basic Income) payments [households may opt out]; 2) Continue stimulus payments for small businesses to allow for economic recovery; 3) Reassess land development and the comprehensive plan since single living units are better for the public health and safety of our residents.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

- 1) Socio-economic development and community reinvestment to include environmental educational programs that promote regenerative and organic [hemp] and farming that will keep our waterways clean, and improve land and soil conditions for generations to come;
- 2) Increase County employee salaries to at least \$15 an hour;
- 3) Eliminate bail bond requirements for the arrested.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

My vision for Tallahassee and Leon County in 2024 and beyond is to be the most progressive and safest community in Florida that offers socio-economic opportunities that will improve the quality of life for all.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

Local governments can eliminate poverty and economic segregation in Leon County, first by hiring lobbyist that will discuss our community's poverty issues in D.C. on Capitol Hill. And, by offering a universal basic income to all households. Through the elimination of the bail bond requirement in Leon County and the Second Judicial Circuit, bail bond centers may then offer loans to community members and a step up versus placing individuals in debt, when individuals already have to pay court costs.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

Hemp Professional and Technical Resource Center for all to learn from and attend and directed toward socially disadvantaged groups. And, also promote the MORE Act, the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act sponsored by U.S. Rep. Jerry Nadler and Senator Kamala Harris.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

Fair and equitable contract and grant awards that promote emerging applications in hemp for agricultural, economic development, the environment, and housing. In one year hemp contributed over \$285 million dollars to the state and local governments and created over 5,000 jobs in the state of Florida.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

Leon County Commissioners should consider reprioritizing funds particularly if the measure does not pass and because taxpayers already contribute heavily to federal, state, and local tax revenues and children are the foundation of our future and as such should be at the forefront of funding to promote health, safety, and well-being. I will vote in favor of the CSC measure; I am concerned about the lack of oversight. The Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence had a major scandal recently regarding exorbitant salaries. What does having a Leon County Children Services Council mean, it means that childrens programs would not be distributed funds directly from the County and rather expenditures would be [line itemed] sent to the CSC and then redistributed to organizations that are already receiving funding from Leon County. So, my main concern about rerouting funds is accountability and waste, instead of sending funds directly to nonprofit childrens services programs they would be intercepted by the CSCs administration first. Thus, creating more bureaucracy and potentially less dollars for programs. As the next Leon Board of County Commissioners At Large I am unbiased and will ensure that the County is spending appropriately on Children Services Programs. If the CSC measure did not pass, Leon County should consider a task force [council] to review childrens programs and nonprofits and eliminate wasteful spending in human services and public safety and redirect funds to childrens services programs.

Jeff Hendry

Hendryforleoncountycommission@gmail.com

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

My name is Jeff Hendry and I am seeking the office of Leon County Commission, Group One At-Large Seat. I decided to run for this seat because I believe our Community is at a crossroads. We are facing many issues that will shape future generations to come. These issues include how we want to grow, develop and redevelop our community over the next 10-20 years, and how we create and build a diverse, equitable economy that provides every resident the opportunity to compete for a living and high-wage job. We must also ensure that every resident is safe, no matter where they live. I believe my 30-year career working directly with local governments across Florida, including the past 11 years in local and regional economic development, will enable me to bring an informed and experienced background that will serve the community and Commission well.

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

Foremost, as an elected official I want to make sure that our local government consistently communicates to our businesses how much we appreciate what they provide to the overall value of our community. It is critical that we communicate this message to our existing businesses to build a culture of support, and also one that will be evident to businesses we are looking to attract and recruit. In my experience, one essential element of building a business-friendly culture is a robust Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program. A high quality BRE must constantly and consistently communicate with our existing businesses. On average, 70 percent or more jobs in communities are generated by existing businesses. We have to ensure we have excellent working relationships and that we have great Business Intelligence (BI) on how they are doing--are they looking to expand or struggling. In those cases where a business is struggling, being able to provide technical assistance and resources (consultations and recovery plans) are critical. It is equally important to provide assistance and resources to those that are seeking to expand high-quality jobs and private capital investment. As an elected official, I would also be looking to revise/eliminate local government policies that unnecessarily inhibit the success of our small businesses.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

COVID-19 has devastated our local economy, particularly our small and medium-size businesses. No other issue will be more important to our community over the next few years than how we rebuild and restore our local economy, and support those who are providing invaluable jobs that drive our economic growth. I would suggest strongly that before we enact any policy changes designed/intended to help rebuild and restore our local economy, we first seek insight, listen to, and consider strongly the voices and experiences of our local businesses. These are the people who have lived and struggled the most, and I believe they have the best insight as to what would be of most benefit to them from a policy perspective. In general, strategic investments in infrastructure intentionally designed to attract private capital investment and job creation should be an emphasis. We should also strategically look at parcels of land, and existing/vacant warehouses and buildings that would be conducive to attracting light/advanced manufacturing facilities, logistics and distribution companies, and/or might be retrofitted/utilized for

workforce talent training and development. Finally, we should be constantly engaging our business community members to gain their insights as to how the developmental and environmental review processes, and permitting might be made more efficient/timely.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

My top three priorities include:

(1) Economic Development and Opportunity. Ultimately, to build a stable, equitable and sustainable community for all residents requires access to high quality jobs with living and high-wages. As an elected official, I believe my responsibility is to enable and facilitate the development of a diverse local economy that produces a variety of job opportunities with great wages. We must focus on career paths, entrepreneurship opportunities, and training that is available to all. I want to encourage an expansion and emphasis on businesses/industries that demand middle and high-skills trades, health care, and technology jobs. These middle and high skills jobs are and will be most in demand for the next 10-20 years; they have also proven to be highly resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic. These types of jobs are also highly accessible to a broader range of our community that are in need of living and high-wage jobs. (2) Public Safety. The safety of every citizen, no matter what area of our county they live, is the most important responsibility of our local government. A commitment to building authentic and trustworthy relationships across our entire community, combined with equitable and effective law enforcement-- especially in the area of violent crime-- is imperative. I believe we will experience a sustainable decrease in crime when we expand economic opportunity for all residents and provide access to living and high wage jobs that lead to successful career paths and business ownership opportunities. (3) Ethical Governance and the Public Trust. Our ability to govern effectively and to gain the community's trust is grounded in unconditional integrity. Effective governance that serves every resident happens when institutions and their leaders combine a strong ethical foundation with strategic decision-making. I will bring that focus and integrity to the Leon County Commission.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

My vision is one where we begin to be recognized nationally as an model community to build a successful business, raise a family, and retire. I see a local economy that includes and works equitably for everyone--with a diversity of jobs in health care, technology, and light/advanced manufacturing, aviation, and logistics and distribution, among others. A community that emphasizes and invests in the critical elements of world class Pre-K and K-12 education across our entire County. A community that leverages the assets of our Universities, Community College and Technical College to attract and retain corporate headquarters and innovative entrepreneurs. Above all, I see a community that has addressed head on the challenges of building genuine community unity and made significant progress.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

Foremost, we must realize the foundation of creating equal opportunity to economic stability is an excellent education. This is the most critical short and long-term focus we need to have in areas of our community where poverty is prevalent. I also believe communicating and emphasizing to our youth and their parents that you do not HAVE to attend college to achieve success in life is important. As we continue to diversify and rebuild our local/regional economy, the ability to pursue highly successful careers in high skills trades, health care, and technology jobs could be very attractive. These jobs will be in high demand over the next 10-20 years and provide excellent opportunities for everyone in our community. These jobs do not require two and four-year degrees, and provide an excellent career path that can lead to economic stability. There must be an emphasis and investment in workforce talent

development, and insuring that access to this training is available to all. We must also support and sustain a robust non-profit sector that provides critical services to many of our most vulnerable residents and families; this sector also provides many living and high-wage jobs in our community.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

I believe the Minority and Women Small Business Enterprise at the Office of Economic Vitality (OEV) provides an invaluable service to the community's network of certified minority, women, and small businesses. The County must continue to emphasize policies and implement actions that provide minority and women-owned businesses equal and fair access to procurement and contracting opportunities issued on behalf of the county. I believe formal and confidential feedback on applications and proposals submitted by minority/women-owned businesses that were not successful should be strongly pursued. A collaborative effort (initiative) among all three Chambers of Commerce and OEV to provide technical assistance could be of immense value to minority and women-owned businesses. Any County policy or program inhibiting the ability of minority/women-owned businesses to compete fairly for contracts needs to be eliminated.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

I would want to be a champion and leader on this issue. My experience leading a 14-county regional economic development partnership has afforded me the opportunity to work on a myriad of issues and with various stakeholders critical to workforce talent development. Foremost, we need to communicate directly with our employers to determine their most immediate and anticipated knowledge and skills needs. We need to be able to systematically link that information with our Universities, Community College and Technical College to insure we have the customized curricula, industry certifications, and degrees to meet anticipated employer demands. We also need to collaborate with our K-12 school system to formally have dual enrollment opportunities in degrees and industry certifications relevant to pursuing work locally. These opportunities should also be communicated through CareerSource--a critical partner--so that unemployed and underemployed individuals may have an opportunity to pursue a second or alternative career. As a point of reference, since 2009, our regional organization has been involved in generating over 1,400 private sector jobs, over \$265 million in private capital investment, and secured nearly \$120 million in federal and state infrastructure and workforce development funds.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

I am a supporter and proponent of the Childrens Services Council. I believe it can be a critical element of meeting many of the current challenges our children and families are facing. I also believe the investment in prevention and early childhood-focused services will provide a tremendous return on investment for years to come. While we often focus on the direct services provided, we must also remember that this is an investment in our future workforce for our community, and provides a tremendous opportunity for us to improve the opportunities for all areas and residents of our community. The long-term results of other counties who have CSC's are undeniable in terms of improving high school graduation rates, reducing teen pregnancies, and reductions in infant mortality, among many others. Such an investment in children, along with our sustained support of Blueprint funds sends a strong message to existing businesses and companies that may be seeking to relocate that this is a community committed to an extremely high quality of life.

Scott Flowers

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Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

Scott Flowers running for Leon County Commissioner, At-large, Group 1. I am running to represent community members, small business owners, and bring a voice of common sense to the Commission.

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

We must remove regulatory barriers, make government as lean and efficient as possible, and commit resources to helping startups and existing businesses get the help they need.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

I don't think the recovery has started yet. We haven't gotten to the worst part of the economic impacts of COVID19. The first step is helping businesses survive what is coming. We must stop all spending that doesn't stay 100% inside our community. We must dedicate all our resources to protecting the existing businesses that make up the lifeblood and identity of our community.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

Alleviating income and wealth disparity through new job creation. Protect the parks and canopy roads that make our community unique. Attack crime by partnering with existing community organizations to create more productive opportunities, training, and resources for our youth and underserved populations.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

Tallahassee should lead the state in every category except crime. We should be a tech hub, a place of economic prosperity, and a center for culture and arts. We have an amazing community of talent, heart, and ambition that is not being utilized effectively.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

There is a gap of information and resources between the government and the community. Too often government seems to be solving problems that are different than what the community needs. We have to get the right people to the table to make sure our resources are addressing our most immediate and dire needs.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

Same as #6. We must create a resource inside the government to help communicate and facilitate the resources that are available, and assist them in applying, receiving, and managing those resources.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

Partnerships with the many wonderful educational organizations we have in our community to provide the correct training for the jobs we are attracting and creating. The talent, ambition, and heart are here. If we provide the opportunities that provide living-wage jobs, the pipeline will stay full.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

I oppose it in its current form. It seems like this is a blank check to collect revenue and figure out what to do with it later. There are at least 6 existing resources in our community filling the same need, and there is no solid plan for exactly how this council will be significantly different or better than the other resources. It is more important that we communicate the resources available to the people who need them most. Once we are fully utilizing the existing resources, then we can research additional options as needed.

Danielle Irwin

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Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

My name is Danielle Irwin and I am running for Leon County Commission At Large. Three years ago, I attended the Oasis Center's Women Can Run conference. While at the conference, I was empowered to pursue my goals of helping others in meaningful ways by running for political office. I chose a County seat because I believe our local governments have the potential to do the most immediate good in the lives of those in our communities. I also want to inspire my own children, now 5 and 15 years old, to believe in themselves and their power to do something with their lives that improves our world starting with where they live. I am grateful for the support of my various communities that helped me weather the storms in my life and want to ensure others feel similarly supported by their local leaders. We are in dynamic times with challenges such as climate change and infectious disease forcing us to rethink how we live and grow. I want to be part of the solution that makes our community more resilient. I have the positive attitude and dedication to continual improvement needed to help us all get back on our feet and be better than ever.

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

What works for one type of business may not address the needs of other business classes. What I commit to as an elected is having an open-door policy to businesses of all types, to listen to their concerns, and to work with them to overcome challenges. My own experiences in business, whether from the time I spent as a small business owner-operator or from my current position as Director with a small business (coastal engineering firm), have formed the basis of my compassion for our small business economy.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

Our local government needs to move quickly, be flexible and get creative when considering how businesses can survive the pandemic, and then stimulate recovery of local businesses ahead of new businesses moving to town once the pandemic eases. The easing of restrictions that may prohibit businesses such as restaurants and retailers from spilling over into outdoor spaces need to be considered. We need to provide supplementary support and resources (financial, adaptation, technical assistance, PPE) to businesses serving low and moderate income households and people of color. These businesses are suffering from existing inequalities that only worsened with the pandemic. I also want to see more focus on the businesses serving neighborhoods, families, and seniors with essential services. Looking past the pandemic, I support recruiting more businesses associated with technology, sustainability industries, and healthcare. We should continue to leverage the institutions of higher learning in our county, including our place as the self-described "Magnetic Capital of the World".

Q4**What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?**

My top three priorities are managing our growth through the lens of sustainability and equity, strengthening our vibrant small business environment, and improving the health of our community.

Q5**In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?**

My vision for Leon County is one of balanced growth with a strong local economy and a healthy, stable community. We are at a time of increased growth and development in our County. This needs to be done sustainably and with an eye towards gaining resilience in capital improvement projects and development practices. We need to be leaning into improving our water quality and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions more holistically. The coalition building, regulatory skills, and 'across the aisle' communication that I have relied on for 20 years as an environmental professional and former state policymaker best equip me to tackle the challenges that limit our potential as a community. The health of our local economy should be rooted in a strong backbone of small businesses. As a former small business owner, I understand the challenges women and minority-owned businesses face in their journey to realize their dream. Our County can bolster support for these businesses and entrepreneurs by more actively reducing obstacles to opportunity. Individualized assistance is a must. I also envision greater local job opportunities in STEAM fields for those both with and without a college degree. These jobs are not just important for our economy but also in breaking cycles of poverty. Smart growth and a strong local economy are tied together with a need for greater community health and wellness. The foundation of good health starts with access to nourishing food, yet Leon County is the 3rd most food insecure county in Florida. Leon's low-income communities, children, and seniors are disproportionately affected when grocery stores close without sufficient good options stepping in to fill the gap. I see a Leon that better nourishes our urban and rural food deserts.

Q6**How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?**

Our local governments can best combat poverty and economic segregation by investing in social services, diverse workforce training and employment assistance programs, and quality of life infrastructure in existing neighborhoods. Our local governments must reprioritize spending to put the needs of our current residents above those of the residents yet to come. This includes more investment in addressing food insecurity, healthcare, and childcare. We have a number of well-intentioned but underfunded and underpublicized programs to support our most vulnerable. I have spoken with people in our rural areas as to why more low-income families do not take advantage of the supportive programs we do have and the answer is often lack of information and lack of transportation. I recommend more targeted outreach such as bringing the information to the people most in need to make it easy for them to learn about and register for supportive programs. Roaming office hours for county staff in libraries, community centers or churches furthest away from our government offices downtown can help bridge the gap to access. Food and housing insecurity are significant contributing factors in perpetuating poverty. I support programs such as mobile food distribution, senior grocery support, child nutrition, local community agriculture and farm-to-table initiatives. Getting rid of hunger helps our children succeed in school, our adults be more effective in their jobs, and our seniors have stronger immune systems to handle the struggles of geriatric healthcare. We can improve kindergarten readiness by investing in programs aimed at assisting childcare facilities. One such program could focus on getting our childcare facilities designated under the State's Gold Seal program through the Department of Children and Families. Currently, only about 25% of our childcare facilities are designated as Gold Seal and very few are near low income neighborhoods. Additionally, I support prioritizing affordable housing mixed into existing and

new neighborhoods, as well as programs that focus on crime intervention and diversion, mental health support, and rapid rehousing and transitioning out of detention facilities back into society.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

A thriving local economy is built on small businesses. As a former small business owner in Northeast Florida, I was supported by great the Chamber of Commerce programs which allowed me to be a confident and successful businesswoman. Yet I still struggled with obstacles to market-entry for larger projects and teaming opportunities even after being designated as a small business enterprise by the local government. I plan to offer more targeted support to small businesses, particularly women and minority-owned small business enterprises (i.e.W/MBE) to reduce barriers to market-entry and recruit underrepresented business categories. Part of this Danielle Irwin Candidate, Leon County Commission At Large Group 1 Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce Candidate Questionnaire 7/24/20 focus includes more points awarded for prime contractors who include W/MBEs on their team when responding to Requests for Proposal issued by the County and Blueprint and consequences for winning firms who underutilize the small businesses on their team. I would also like to see more Chamber-supported programs that teach W/MBEs the basics of running a business from accounting and business planning to marketing and client management. Another good model to look at is Junior Achievement programming to get youth excited about business. Junior Achievement of the Big Bend won a grant from our local government's Office of Economic Vitality in 2019 to bring entrepreneurial training into high schools. This is just one example of the supportive programs we need to expand in our community that will help break the cycle of poverty, build a talent pipeline, and nurture our youth's dreams and aspirations.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

Many studies show the connection between good jobs and quality of life. Florida's large, retired population, and events such as our current global pandemic have highlighted the need for healthcare workers, thus further increasing demand for those jobs in our local markets. In addition, there is a need for highly technical jobs to support our County as the magnetic capital of the world. Leon County and Tallahassee have been focusing on providing job opportunities for skilled and technical vocations through the programs at Lively College and through Leon Works and TEMPO. I plan to broaden this focus to recruit into STEAM professions (sciences, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics), many of which do not require a four-year degree, such as registered nurses, radiology technicians, dental hygienists, graphic designers, and air traffic controllers. I propose training, outreach, and incentive programs targeting not just high school students and at-risk young adults, but also those pursuing a second (or third) career and those who are looking to improve their financial security. Strong collaboration with the private sector and our institutions of higher-learning will guide additional solutions with focus on STEAM, as well as vocational trades. Our local governments are also large employers who play a role in building the talent pipeline. Leon County alone employs approximately 1800 people and should commit to staff training in leadership, skills, and innovation, as well as provide for upward mobility and succession planning. We can work across our three local governments (County, City and Blueprint) and our local schools and colleges to leverage support for workforce training that is responsive to the needs of existing and new businesses, while looking 10 years down the line to prepare now for new needs in the arena of sustainability and resilience to climate change.

Q9**This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?**

I am supportive of the formation of a Children's Services Council (CSC) and will be voting for it in November. Prioritizing our children and families is an important long-term investment strategy for a healthier, stable, and more equitable Leon County. Due to the breadth of topics that the CSC is aimed to target in the three focus areas: (1) success in schools and life, (2) healthy children and family, and (3) stable, nurturing families and communities, clear metrics will need to be used to measure success from the potential for \$8M annually to be invested. The funds generated from the proposed new property tax should be channeled into programs/projects identified through transparent ranking criteria. Properly administered, the CSC can be a game changer in improving our community's quality of life and I hope it passes in November. One concern that should be addressed, however, is how equitable the tax burden is. Given how challenging it already is for low-income and marginalized people to become land owners, I worry that an additional property tax may present more of a burden than it would for more financially stable landowners, creating a further disadvantage to land ownership and perpetuating wealth disparity. This can potentially be addressed through the programs funded by the CSC.

Kelly Otte

ottecampaign2020@gmail.com

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

Hello – my name is Kelly Otte and I'm running to be your next Leon County Commissioner, At Large, Group 1. I'm excited to have the opportunity to assume greater responsibility and elevate my service to our beautiful community. I've called Leon County home for almost 25 years and I have devoted myself to working with government, business, and nonprofits to address some of the biggest issues facing the us. I believe I have a unique perspective of the county's strengths and opportunities and it's a perspective that is needed on the County Commission. My background and experiences are diverse and may surprise people who only know about my work with the nonprofit sector. I grew up in a lower income working class family – my dad was a Plumber and my mom a stay at home mom. I started working at the age of 10 working on a rhododendron farm and in strawberry and bean fields in Oregon. As an adult I worked for the Federal Bureau of Land Management, in a commercial shopping center development company, a commercial real estate company, and in manufacturing and sales with Chris Craft Boats. I opened and operated a thrift store here in Leon County, was a sole proprietor of my consulting business and I taught at FSU for 11 years as an adjunct professor. And I have been the leader of 4 nonprofit businesses in Leon County, as small as 2 employees and as large as 65. I have been thinking about running for several years but made the decision after watching my father be cycled from the hospital, rehabilitation facilities, nursing homes and assisted living facilities because of the extraordinary lack of affordable senior living facilities in Leon County. After he died, in his honor, I promised I would do one big thing to honor his memory. Running for office to address crippling issues facing our community the issues is what I decided to do for him, and others like him.

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

New businesses, small businesses and entrepreneurship are not only vitally important to the economic well-being of the community but are also an excellent opportunity to help people move up from restricted incomes and/or poverty. The fastest growing segment of entrepreneurs in the country are Black women. They are also the citizens in our community least likely to have access to startup or growth funding. The chambers and local government need to work together to identify opportunities to partner investors with these owners, as well as ensure that business owners from all walks of life have equitable access to high-quality entrepreneurship training and resources. As your commissioner I commit to listening and learning. I will not represent that I have an expertise when I don't and will work incredibly hard to understand and be thoughtful in making policy proposals and decisions that are in the best interest of the county.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

This is an unprecedented time and our small businesses are struggling. I've been closely involved in conversations with business owners who are unsure how to keep their doors open. As an elected leader, I would work to ensure that the County and OEV are looking for every opportunity to identify state and federal funding to help. I would also seek to partner with the chambers as they work to provide training and leadership in talking through situations with small businesses to look for creative solutions. I would be a strong, visible leader in encouraging people to shop locally, and would support local efforts to create a

hub for small businesses which would allow customers to shop from one location and receive fast delivery – all from locally owned businesses. I will also be wholly committed to strengthening the capacity of our nonprofit business sector as well as educating the community about the economic impact of the sector. I will work closely with the United Partners for Human Services, the Institute on Nonprofit Innovation and Excellence and the Council on Culture and Arts to understand the needs of the sector and to help when possible.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

The most urgent issue facing Leon County right now and how to restart our economy after the pandemic begins to ebb. We have far too many people out of work and small businesses are in serious trouble and this needs to be everyone's priority. Other priorities for me will be to address economic disparity, reducing crime using innovative community strategies, balancing necessary development with the natural beauty of the county, and addressing the lack of affordable assisted living and nursing home facilities in our area. Additionally, I am very committed to creating a plan for equine tourism in Leon County. Between the county and the state, we have one of the most beautiful trail systems in Florida and are missing an opportunity to bring equine tourism dollars into Leon County from Florida, Alabama, and Georgia.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

I love Leon County and am grateful I was able to raise my children in a safe community filled with possibilities for them. That has not been the same circumstance for everyone in Leon County. For the past 25 years I've worked with families who are scared every day in their homes and on their streets. I will work tirelessly for a Leon County that works together so that every citizen can be safe and have opportunities. To accomplish these all three sectors of our community --- business, government and nonprofit – must be working together. I am wholeheartedly committed to that vision.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

Leon County needs to adopt a collective impact model to reduce poverty and economic segregation. I will work diligently to bring together people from the business, government, nonprofit sectors as well as citizens with the lived experience of poverty, to develop strategies and influence policies which move the needle. The principles of collective impact are a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communications, and backbone infrastructure. We must have a strategic plan to reduce poverty – much like we do with Blueprint, the Comp Plan, and the Integrated Sustainability Action Plan, and others – otherwise we will continue to try and address poverty with disconnected good ideas. It's going to take multi-sector collaboration, comprehensive and new thinking, and change to impact poverty and I am completely committed to working with others to do this necessary work.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

I would take every opportunity to promote women and minority owned businesses and expect the county to do the same. I would work with all three chambers to help leadership with efforts and opportunities. I would be very interested in supporting micro-lending programs to help people get their business started or expanded. These kinds of loans can help an underpaid worker develop a side job to supplement their income.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

I am committed to increasing opportunities for our workforce to earn a living wage and believe it will make it much easier for businesses to recruit and maintain skilled talent. I believe TCC has done an excellent job of developing educational opportunities in areas where there is a lack of skilled workers, but I would advocate and support programs that allow people to achieve greater prosperity. I was raised by a plumber and am a big believer in the trades and vocational schools so would do whatever I can to increase the number of students receiving trades certification.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

I am an enthusiastic supporter of the CSC. To create and maintain a talent pipeline, nourish small businesses, and reduce poverty and crime we must have children who have every opportunity to thrive. The CSC is an investment in tomorrow's workforce.

Robin Colsonrcolson120@gmail.com**Q1**

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

Robin Colson, Leon County Commission-at-Large. I am running because Tallahassee is on the brink of becoming a large city and the decisions we make in the next 10 years will set the stage for the kind of city we become. I believe that Tallahassee's economy must become more diversified if our residents and our small businesses are to thrive.

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

I'm most interested in reducing the burden for small business owners. For example, can the county fund the start-up of a cooperative or shared services organization that provides cost-effective IT, Payroll, and other administrative services that small business could contract for at a nominal fee. I'd also like the county and city to cooperate on forgiveness and deferment policies for public costs such as tax payments, utility payments, etc. Finally, I'd like the county and city to work together on the creation of an emergency fund that small business pay a nominal amount into on a regular basis to draw on in times of emergency (hurricanes, COVID, etc.)

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

My number one issue is to bring clean manufacturing jobs to Leon County. They are long overdue here and one of the reasons our small businesses struggle is because we don't have enough jobs with pay that produces enough disposable income to patronize our small businesses. We are no longer a government town - those jobs are leaving - and we will NEVER be a tourist attraction, so good clean manufacturing jobs are absolutely needed. Some of the fastest growing jobs in Leon County today are in retail, hospitality, and healthcare services - we can do better.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

Clean manufacturing, affordable homes to own (no more apartments), and development on the south and west sides.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

A strong and vibrant middle class to close the widening gap between the haves and have nots.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

One of the primary causes of the poverty and economic segregation is the lack of good jobs for unskilled and middle skilled workers. Today in Leon County, these workers can get only part-time minimum wage jobs with no benefits or worker protections. Manufacturing provides full time, good paying jobs with benefits. They also provide sustained employment which enables employees to buy home - another key need for climbing out of poverty. I recognize there are many elements involved in reducing economic disparities, but manufacturing jobs and affordable homes, along with accessible goods and resources is, I believe, the first needs we have to address.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

Blind evaluation of vendor proposals and applications for business loans.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

I can't imagine that it would be difficult to maintain this as a top priority; it absolutely should be. First, I'd promote regular and ongoing communications between major workforce players and our colleges, universities, and CTE providers to make sure their programming matches our workforce needs. I'd also rely heavily on data and guidance from relevant organizations like the Chamber, DEO, CareerSource, North Florida Economic Development Partnership, etc. to forecast short and long term needs and plan strategically to meet them.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

I support the CSC. I realize it is a financial burden for businesses, but the need is huge here with a weakening economic base. In my mind, we either pay to support impoverished, underserved children today or we pay much more throughout many of their adult lives.

Carolyn Cummings

cummingsforcommissioner@gmail.com

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

Carolyn D. Cummings, Leon County Commission At Large, Seat 1

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

I would make sure there are resources available for small business, including small business loans, assistance with business creating business plans with short and long term goals.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

Short term and long term policies should be adopted to provide financial assistance during pandemic and natural disasters.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

My top three priorities are affordable housing, affordable healthcare and liveable wages.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

My vision for Leon County in 2024 and beyond includes improves access to affordable housing, healthcare and increased business and industry.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

The first step is to recognize and admit there are disparities. Local government must be proactive in attracting business and industry that will provide liveable wages to elevate the standard of living of our impoverished citizens.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

I would promote grants and low interest loan to this segment of the population to enhance their ability to open and sustain businesses.as a means to assist

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

My role would be to support programs in place that have proven successful and if there is a need for revision, I would be willing to explore and entertain different options.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

I support the Children's Services Council because there is a need in Leon County for early mentoring and educational intervention so no child will be left behind.



CITY OF TALLAHASSEE

City Commission Seat 1

- **Elaine Bryant**
- **Jack Porter**
- **William Moore V (Did not submit)**
- **Jermaine Miller (Did not submit)**

Elaine Bryant

ewynette@gmail.com

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

Elaine Bryant, City Commission Seat 1. I am newly appointed to the Tallahassee City Commission following the vacancy left by Scott Maddox after his indictment. I applied for the appointment because I have dedicated my adult life to serving my community in various capacities, including through my work as a Leon County Schools school psychologist, Director within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and Department of Juvenile Justice, and now as a small business owner. I also serve our community through the many board appointments over the years to include Habitat for Humanity, Greater Tallahassee Chamber, Urban League, Goodwill Industries, through my church, and by helping to manage concessions at Rickard's High School basketball games where my husband is the coach.

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

As a small business owner for many years, I know well the leap of faith that it requires to start a business. Small businesses are absolutely the backbone of our local economy and I have worked diligently to support our small business community in my time on the City Commission. I recently took over as the Chair of the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency, which directs significant economic and business supports and investment within our community. Particularly through the Tallahassee-Leon County Office of Economic Vitality, we have developed and operated a set of targeted industry incentives to support small businesses, as well as workforce training grants, the road fund, the DesignWorks team, and business-oriented data and analytics available to all businesses in our area. These resources are critical to supporting the small businesses in our area.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

Following the shutdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, your local government jumped to action to support our business community, economy, and residents. Through small business grants, utility bill deferments, and utility bill rebates, we have worked hard to support our businesses as they struggle to keep people employed and to support our residents so that they can continue keeping our local economy stimulated. As we continue to move through an ever-changing environment for businesses, I am committed to remaining nimble and providing additional supports to local businesses to keep them afloat. I also believe that public investment in our community is key to spurring growth and drawing in private investment into our community and local economy. As we continue implementing Blueprint 2020 dollars and City goals related to community beautification and redevelopment, I believe we must continue seeking supplementary private investment into our local economy.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

My top three goals as a candidate for public office and in my present role as your City Commissioner are to: implement the 5-year strategic plan we passed last year which will direct our work and measure

outcomes; increase investment in the southside of our community which will increase opportunities for private investment, job creation, and economic growth; and improving public safety in our community through the creation of a new citizens oversight committee and a new headquarters for the Tallahassee Police Department.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

My vision for the future of Tallahassee ties into my previous answer. My goal is to help Tallahassee become a more equitable community, with opportunities for gainful employment and business development in all corners of our city. These goals are attainable through careful strategic planning and meticulous execution of those plans.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

I believe that the poverty and economic disparities in Tallahassee are one of the most pressing issues we currently face. The southside of our community has been excluded from meaningful public investment for far too long and that has resulted in worse health, life, and economic outcomes for many of our residents. This can only be remedied by increased public investment and incentives for private businesses to expand in that part of our community. Public and private investment will create new opportunities for gainful employment so that all of our city's residents can earn a living wage to support themselves and their families. That investment should also be supplemented by job training programs such as the City's TEMPO program, which provides skilled training to young people in our community to make them more employable and improve our local workforce.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

As a black woman who also happens to be a business owner, I know first-hand the very real challenges faced by those minorities that want to begin or expand a locally owned business. We must increase both supply and demand. Supply by helping with workforce training, entrepreneurial education and other such programs targeted to minorities, but also demand-side by increasing minority participation in RFP/RFQ scoring for government projects as well as incentivize local businesses who wish to also do business with local government. These programs won't be quick and they won't be easy but over time we can grow local minority-owned businesses.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

We are blessed to have two world-class universities in our City along with state and technical colleges. These institutions provide Tallahassee with a broad, skilled workforce. I see this issue as cyclical, though. If our local businesses are thriving, they will be hiring more people as they graduate from our colleges and universities. Supporting local businesses and our local economy is critical so that there are high-paying jobs available to students as they graduate to incentivize them to stay in Tallahassee. I also believe that we have an advantage over many other cities in the state when it comes to retaining recent graduates because of the natural amenities in and around Tallahassee. In the City of Tallahassee alone, there are 88 parks, 70 miles of bike trails, 55 tennis courts, 29 playgrounds, 11 public pools. Our City's

investment in our outdoor recreation facilities and amenities supplement the effort to retain talent locally by providing a high quality of life overall.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

I wholeheartedly support the creation of a Children's Services Council (CSC) in Leon County. I applaud the County for taking the time to host a comprehensive planning committee to outline what a local CSC will look like, what our needs are, and how a CSC can support meeting those needs. I see improving the outcomes of our community's children as an extension of all of the goals and aspirations for our City I discussed above. Supporting our children will reduce our community's crime rate and strengthen our local workforce, both of which are good for all of Tallahassee's residents.

Jack Porter

jack@jackfortallahassee.com

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

My name is Jack Porter and I'm running for Tallahassee City Commission, Seat 1. I'm running to bring a united vision to City Hall for the betterment of our civic and economic future. I'm also running to give the voters a choice in who serves in this crucial office for years to come. This is the first time the public has gotten to weigh in since a sitting Commissioner was indicted - getting this choice right matters a great deal to the future of our community, as you know. My educational background, work experience, as well as community connections have equipped me to serve in this role. Working together with Chamber members and our small business community, I know we can charter a brighter future for Tallahassee and the Big Bend.

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

I would start by doing something the current Commission is not doing: listening. Since March, dozens of cities, counties, school boards and other local governments have accepted real-time public comment at their hearings. Tallahassee and Leon County have not, and I think small businesses suffer in the absence of a robust, intentional conversation about the future of our community as dozens of small businesses shutter their doors, potentially for good. No one understands this better than Chamber members, and I know together we can make positive changes to move the needle and advance our community forward.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

By investing in the areas where they currently operate and where they would potentially like to operate. When we look after the needs of Tallahassee's customers on the demand side - many of whom are struggling as badly as businesses are - we ensure an economic environment that can sustain a diverse base of small, locally-owned businesses. Balancing incentives to attract companies seeking to capitalize on our city's amazing research facilities and public infrastructure with direct investments to folks most in need, I know we can grow Tallahassee sustainably. That's my commitment to the Tallahassee public and the business community. With your help, we will get it done.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

Economic development, public safety, and ethics & transparency. Tallahassee has a mixed reputation across the state regarding all three — as a Commissioner, I will be laser-focused on tending to those lingering issues.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

First, a rebranding, perhaps in the form of a new flag or City symbol (away from our frankly stale star-based palate) — but it's also time for a new way of thinking. For decades, local Commissions and Commissioners have talked about making Tallahassee a place where people would come to study at our world-class institutions of higher learning, and then actually stay here to start their careers and put down roots in the community. My candidacy offers a chance for us to walk the walk and bring a perspective to City Hall that truly understands what that's truly about in today's world, with all its uncertainty and opportunity.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

Investing in the neighborhoods that everyone knows have been left behind. Experts in demography, sociology, and economics have understood for a long time that addressing the root causes of poverty involves intentional investments of public dollars in the areas that need it most. It's time we put the plans that have gathered dust on planners' shelves for years into action. With the results of the 32304 Summits beginning to come into focus, I believe the time is right to move ahead with this forward-thinking vision, and I believe I am the future-oriented candidate that will best help the Chamber affect shifts - in both perception and material outcomes - that we all agree are much needed.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

To a large degree, the recipe for opportunity for minority- and women-owned business is the same as that for success for all of our businesses: robust infrastructure investments to facilitate commerce; assistance with the permitting process, marketing, and other resource-intensive tasks often outside the core competency of an aspiring entrepreneur; and making sure our customer service at the City is world-class. Predictable processes and a stable City government that the public trusts is key to prosperity for all businesses, MWSBEs and otherwise. At this time of reckoning with past injustices like redlining and other discriminatory practices that occurred right here in our community, getting this right is more important than ever, and we must be intentional about investing in areas of town that will facilitate equitable growth. I will bring that perspective to the Commission and will make it a priority every day.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

My candidacy represents in many ways the culmination of years of thought, discussion, and nibbling around the edges policy-wise when it comes to building our bench of local talent and making sure it stays here. If people continue to think of Tallahassee as insular and dominated by an incumbent insider network resistant to change, they will leave for greener pastures and seek opportunity elsewhere. If we get this electoral decision right and send the signal that Tallahassee is receptive to new ideas and truly open for business to all, that in itself will be a significant factor in many students and young professionals early in their careers leaning more towards staying here. The role I will play will be to ceaselessly steward that positive line of thinking every day in my conversations with residents, business owners and customers, and students who currently comprise our burgeoning pipeline of talent which local dollars and expertise are preparing for success, whether it's here or elsewhere. I will make it my personal mission to

encourage as many folks as possible to bet long on Tallahassee and vote with their feet to contribute and flourish here, just like I have.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

This decision truly conflicts me — in an uncertain economy with downward-trending revenues and personal incomes, I am wary of a tax increase and I know many in the business community feel the same way. I know this because they have told me as much, many times. At the same time, there is a great need and a yawning gap between those relatively unscathed by COVID-19's tumult and our most vulnerable. I will decide which way to cast my vote closer to November.



CITY OF TALLAHASSEE

City Commission Seat 2

- **Trish Brown (Did not respond)**
- **Lynette Halter**
- **Curtis Richardson**
- **Geraldine Seay (Did not respond)**
- **Bill Schack**

Lynette Halter

Halterhelps@gmail.com

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

Lynette Halter, City Commissioner Seat 2. Decided to run when learned the crime rate especially violent crime is terribly high. No one was talking about this serious problem when I began campaigning.

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

Find out why it is so hard to get a business started & make it easier.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

Think instead of reacting closing so many businesses. For example, beauty shops were closed but they have very exacting standards of sanitation.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

Help our law enforcement get crime under control. Help business get started & give financial incentives for training employees. Instead of talking about inequality get the information of what is available to help low income people to them.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

Tallahassee has so many nice parks & friendly we will be the best town in USA.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

Compile information of resources & get that to people through radio, community centers, churches even tv. People don't know about the many programs to help them, some of them because they can't read.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

Measures are there to aid minority & women-owned businesses. I am a woman who started a business & I am part of a minority. Get the information to them.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

We have the talent but don't have the jobs.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

It sounds like a good idea but is it just another bureaucracy? Places for children & teens to gather which is watched over like the Police Athletic League especially for parents who are low income is needed.

Curtis Richardsoncabaide@aol.com**Q1**

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

My name is Curtis Richardson. I am running for re-election this year to continue providing the leadership needed to move our city forward. As a long time resident of this community I have dedicated myself to public service. I feel that history of service and the experience I have on the Commission as its longest serving member will be valuable over the next four years. I want to work with my colleagues and other leaders in the community to make our city one that each of us can be proud of what area we live in.

Q2

Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?

There are many initiatives we have undertaken to make it easier to own a small business in Tallahassee. One of the actions we have taken during my tenure on the Commission was to repeal the requirement for obtaining a Business Tax Certificate for businesses that are located or operate within the city limits. Through the Office of Economic Vitality, we are able to provide direct support to small businesses in the Tallahassee area. The technical assistance provided to these businesses is free and personalized based on their need. Lastly, we will continue to improve the permitting process and provide assistance to small business through the process.

Q3

With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?

Within two weeks of the occurrence of the Coronavirus pandemic, the City Commission recognized the need to assist our small businesses that were struggling to stay afloat due to a decline in patronage. We activated a grant program that immediately put cash assistance into the hands of these businesses. In many instances this was a "bridge" for these businesses until federal dollars arrived. Many were able to survive due to this help. We assisted 561 businesses that employ 5,000 people. This pandemic continues to have a severe negative impact on our economy and our local businesses. As we look ahead we must work to promote the health and safety of employees and customers as well as building consumer confidence. We must work with our local Chambers to help determine the kind of government assistance we can provide to make our small businesses successful and begin to employ our residents again. I will depend upon our office of Economic Vitality to bring forth proposal that the Commission can consider for rebuilding our local economy and getting our people back to work.

Q4

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

My top three priorities when re-elected to the Commission will be one, to ensure that residents of the city and guests are safe from crime. Secondly, I would like to see us continue to grow our economy and create more private sector high-wage, high-skill jobs. Third, I want to see us grow our city in a planned and responsible manner. I want to see us invest in redeveloping and revitalizing those areas of our city that have long been neglected. This has to be an integral part of our plan for how the city grows.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

I envision a city that is vibrant and continues to grow in a responsible way. I see a city that values and embraces the diversity that exists here. Our will be a city we all can be proud of regardless of where we live. I envision a city with lots of opportunity for who choose to live, work and raise a family here. I see us as a city that is environmentally sensitive and protects its natural resources. I'd like to see us be the hub of economic, cultural, recreational, educational and social opportunities for our region and beyond.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

The poverty and economic segregation we see in our community cannot be addressed solely through government solutions. These are issues that must be addressed by the community as a whole to resolve. Certainly, the government has a central role to play in what is a complicated and multi-faceted issue. Government's role can involve investing resources in long neglected areas of our city to improve public safety, infrastructure, housing, economic development and the level of city services. Government can provide funding for those organizations that provide social and human services. There must be a partnership with our education sector to ensure quality education and job training opportunities for those in need. We must work with the business sector to provide job opportunities in positions that pay at least a fifteen dollar per hour minimum wage. We can continue to enforce our policy of requiring developers to provide affordable/workforce housing in new residential developments. We can also continue programs like TEMPO and the Summer Youth Employment Program and the electric utility apprenticeship program. This will require a long-term and sustained effort but is a goal worth striving for.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

Promoting opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses is a major priority for the city of Tallahassee. Along with the County we have a dedicated department within our economic development office that focuses on providing increased opportunities for MWSBE's. The department provides these businesses with free technical assistance. Since 2018 the office has provided over 500 MWSBE's with free business consultations and referrals for assistance. We must continue to promote networking and training opportunities for these business owners. I feel the city must redouble its efforts to include MWSBE's in the procurement process for obtaining bids and contracts. We should encourage partnerships between these businesses and larger, more established businesses so that they can grow and compete for major contracts themselves. Because we know that minority and women-owned businesses are more like to hire minority and women employees, we can address the poverty and unemployment issues in our community as well as crime. I would like to see the Office of Economic Vitality work with the local Chambers to draft a plan for increasing utilization of MWSBE's in government contracting that includes aspirational goals for participating in

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

I will advocate for partnering with our educational institutions to create that pipeline. We should work with Career Source and the Chambers to connect students and other young people with job opportunities in our community. I would also continue to advocate for career and technical training for those students who

would like to acquire a marketable skill that will allow them to earn a good wage. We must continue to promote the importance of skilled careers as a path to economic success. I will continue to support programs like TEMPO and TFLA that are designed to provide low-income and minority youth with training opportunities for future employment.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

We must invest in our children at an early age if they are to have chance to develop, learn and successfully complete in life. This would be an investment on the front end that prevent a lot of issues that we have to pay for on the back end that is much more costly to the tax payers and society. Therefore, I am in full support of the Children's Services Council and potential it has for improving the life outcomes of so many youth in our community.

Bill Schackbillschack@comcast.net**Q1****What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?**

Bill Schack, City Commission Seat 1. I decided to run for office due to the fact that many of the same issues in Tallahassee exist as they did in 2018. We need to continue to bring new voices to City Hall and replace the last piece of the puzzle that brought our City the darkest days for our local Government.

Q2**Small businesses are the backbone of our community's economy, how would you as an elected official work to make owning and operating a business in Tallahassee easier for residents?**

First of all, you hear so much about the permitting process, so we need to address that issue by streamlining it, and making it more business friendly. Next, we need to bring business to the Southside, and other areas of town that need to create jobs. We must work on incentives for those willing to open businesses in that area, and we must find ways to increase job training to fill those jobs. In addition, we must find a way to help those who have trouble finding work such as the homeless, and those coming out of prison.

Q3**With so many local businesses struggling to recover from the COVID19 pandemic, what policy changes would you put forward to spur growth and improve business outcomes in the years ahead?**

This City Commission needs to start having that conversation now. This Commission during Covid-19 has been very reactive, not proactive, and we need a plan. I would suggest working with landlords and City Utilities to reduce costs or help in some way. One policy change is to remove the mask mandate, however, hopefully, we will be past this pandemic by the time I take office. However, if small business is the backbone of our community as stated above, we need to come up with a plan to help save those businesses who will be hurt for months to come. Maybe another round of Blueprint money will be necessary as we need to help issue now, not 20 and 30 years down the road.

Q4**What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?**

1. We must address crime and public safety as the number one priority in this City, and we do not. That means finding a way to staff it correctly, give the new Chief all the tools and training to do the job, and get moving on building a new Police Station.
2. We need to remove the money from politics by addressing City vendors and political consultants. You either want to receive contracts and money from the City or you want to run political campaigns, you can't do both. In addition, developers who wish to continue to get projects, voted on by City Commissioners should not be able to donate thousands of dollars to their campaigns.
3. We need to look into firing the City Manager or having him resign. His colossal failure during the hiring process of our new Chief should have cost him his job. Add to that the decision to paint a mural on City property with no discussion by the citizens and the City Commission was the wrong decision, and not his to make.

Q5

In 2024, Tallahassee and Leon County will celebrate our community's 200th anniversary. What is your vision for our community in 2024 and beyond?

I think we should go all out to celebrate, however, we need to include the residents in a big way. Maybe all the non-profits, businesses, and City Departments who want to participate should be welcome into the planning. We should do something bold like change our City logo, or dedicate a new park during that year. Let 2024 be the year to make some big news about Tallahassee, and address issues in front of us now.

Q6

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

How about we actually address it? This problem has existed for many, many years, yet we still have pockets of this City with run down neighborhoods, dark streets, unwalkable streets, and crime. Those are not new, and have not been seriously addressed. We need to bring business to those areas to help create jobs and economic opportunity. We must fund the non-profit community who work in those neighborhoods that struggle, so they can reach more people and improve more lives.

Q7

What measures would you promote to increase opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in our community?

Our City has already created the Office of Economic Vitality, so we have an entire Department promoting, increasing opportunities, and providing assistance to new business owners.

Q8

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that remains a top priority?

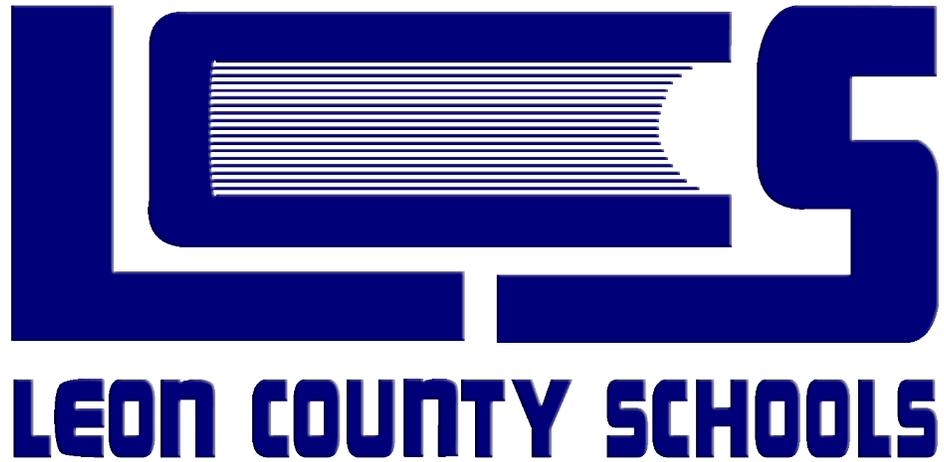
Is it a top priority? Building apartments that will cost \$2000/mo will certainly not help keep talent in Tallahassee. In addition, until we get our crime problem under control, it will be hard to keep students from moving to other Florida Cities after they graduate. However, we should address other employment fields such as non-profits who should become a very important part of our City in the future, so we should try to keep talent in that pipeline as well.

Q9

This November, voters will have an opportunity to decide whether or not to create a Childrens Services Council in Leon County. What is your position on the CSC?

This City has a old funding source called the CHSP Grant process, that needs to be updated, and it should be funded with the amount the CSC is proposing to collect and spend each year for Children's Services. I am opposed to a tax on property owners to help with Children's Services. I think the way this has been promoted by various groups, put into meeting agendas, and promoted by various elected officials is wrong. Our elected officials have been irresponsible with funding sources like the CRA, therefore, I do not think another pool of money ran and distributed by an unelected board is a good decision. This State receives millions of dollars in money from various Federal programs meant to help Children, so we should be looking into why that money is not having an impact on our children. I think we should be funding the programs that operate close to the children that already exist in our community. In fact, we should take a very close look at all those organizations to make sure they are spending money

on their mission not administration and a building. I could be convinced our City needs a CSC, however, with the size of our City and County budget, we should be able to find money to fund the organizations who exist right now serving Children in our City. Let's improve the many neighborhoods forgotten, and left behind over the past 20 years by our elected officials, and let's give those neighborhoods the opportunity to improve first.



**Leon County School Board
District 4**

- **Dee Dee Rasmussen**
- **Alex Stemle**

DeeDee Rasmussen

ddr@deedee.org

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

My name is DeeDee Rasmussen and I am running for re-election to the Leon County School Board in District 4. I am running in 2020 because I believe that proven leadership and experience is more important now than ever. Especially in this prolonged, challenging and difficult time, our community needs strong, smart, steady, sensitive, and sure leadership. I seek the privilege of continuing to serve our community and help us get through this era, together.

Q2

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

(#1) I want to ensure educational opportunities that inspire and enable students to develop into creative and critical thinkers, effective communicators and collaborators, college/career ready graduates and engaged/ethical citizens. (#2) Accomplishing these things requires a healthy and safe environment (mental and physical health amid a pandemic while also implementing the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas School Safety Act) that enables optimal teaching and learning. (#3) Educating the whole child, not only in the core academic areas but also through classical education, the arts and athletics, exposure to career and technical education options, and utilizing a menu of pathways for all types of students with varying interests, abilities and unique needs.

Q3

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the stagnant poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

The Chamber endorsed Children's Services Council is a great example of a partnership that will help us better prepare our youngest and most at-risk children for school readiness and success. Also, I am very proud to have been a part of bringing the original "Community School Model" to Leon County. This includes a 25-year commitment from local governments, the Children's Home Society, FSU, FAMU, TCC, FSU Medical School and others to provide wrap-around services at and around Sabal Palm Elementary School. Other similar initiatives like the South City Foundation and Purpose Built Communities are positive steps in the right direction where citizens, businesses, non-profits, educational institutions and local governments can partner together to address this significant issue in our community.

Q4

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that this remains a top priority?

I have always supported multiple pathways to graduation, including a strong career and technical education track. I think this could be enhanced by encouraging career option awareness in the lower grades (teaching skills and trades) while working to remove the stigma that the career/technical track is viewed as less valuable than the college track (which is slightly more challenging in a college football town). We could enhance work-based learning models at the high school level to include pre-apprenticeship, job shadowing, and on-the-job training. But LCS can't do this alone, businesses must partner with LCS so that together we can build a strong workforce for our community.

Q5

There continues to be a shortage of skilled labor available for various industries that are essential to economic growth. How would you suggest our community make training for high skill jobs more available to the broader population?

As a school board member, I understand how important technical education is, not just to our K-12 system, but to our future workforce. Just as we look at reading, math and science, we should also be looking at how we can integrate career and technical education in all levels of education. When the right students are inspired by and involved in career and technical education, their graduation rates improve and their math/science scores go up. We have to ensure a plethora of offerings that show students distinct pathways that lead to career training and employment beyond high school graduation.

Q6

What do you believe Leon County Schools should be doing to safely and effectively educate our children during the Covid19 pandemic?

Obviously, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in complex and unprecedented challenges as we prepare to embark into more of the unknown when students resume virtual or in-person instruction after the summer break. We are committed to the highest priority of protecting the safety, health, and well-being of every student, faculty members and staff members. Just as surely, we are continually seeking and following the advice of health and medical experts about the safest paths forward, while also complying with the law. That is why LCS convened approximately 20 focus groups and we appointed experts to a Task Force to assist us in preparing for and anticipating multiple eventualities. While providing parents and employees as many virtual and in-person options as possible, we will continue to enhance distance learning (with one platform and one device for every student) while adapting classroom attendance at schools to minimize health risks. There are many valid reasons on all sides of the debate about opening 50 schools across the expanse of our school district. For those who choose to return to campus, we will set the example of safe and responsible models for operating because our future will depend on a well-educated workforce, as it always has.

Q7

How can businesses best engage with Leon County Schools in order to support the education of the children in our community?

Provide externship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities for our students; become a business partner; encourage employees to become mentors/volunteers; sponsor a school or a specific event; create an employee service/team-building experience by adopting a school project for a day; make a tax-deductible donation to the Foundation for Leon County Schools; lend your particular area of expertise to assist with a unique instructional experience or project on a school campus.

Alex Stemle

stemleforschoolboard@gmail.com

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

Name: Alex Stemle Age: 39 Profession: Career Educator I have over 20 years of education experience successfully implementing programs that support student achievement through strong partnerships and positive relationships within ALL our local schools. I am a lifelong resident of Leon County and attended Sealey Elementary, Raa Middle, Leon High, and Maclay School. In addition, I have earned my Master of Business Administration from Florida State University and Master of Educational Leadership from the American College of Education. Throughout my career as an educator, I have successfully implemented successful programs in All of our local schools. Having the ability to create and realize innovative solutions, despite structural challenges and changing solutions, can create clarity for our community. My leadership on the school board will bring a voice that understands the dynamics of organization change, school culture, and student learning.

Q2

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

Supporting student learning will be a priority. I will leverage my twenty years of school-based experience implementing programs district wide to develop school board policies and priorities that will improve our student experiences. I will provide active, visible, and involved leadership within our community to ensure effective and transparent decision making by the school board. Supporting our school district and school leaders to think outside the box when approaching space, flexibility of time, scheduling, and redefining where learning happens, can ensure we can meet the needs of our diverse community in the changing world we live in.

Q3

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the stagnant poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

Strong community schools are critical to attracting families and businesses to Leon County and the economic development of our community. It is important that taxpayer investment is directed toward classrooms and learning space that matches the growth and development of our community. Lack of focus on overcrowded classrooms, facility needs, and growing resident enrollment within schools here in District 4 is detrimental to our local community school. I will be laser focused on leveraging the school board resources, district wide relationships, and community platform to ensure the highest quality learning environment possible for all students.

Q4

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that this remains a top priority?

Our school leaders must work collaboratively with community stakeholders to ensure we maintain a talent pipeline that can support the greater community workforce needs. I plan to leverage my experience developing and implementing public-private partnerships in our schools, with a priority in seeking "win-win" community projects that will create opportunities for our students, teachers, and administrators, and existing businesses across our region. Creating robust communication channels, relationships, and

programs at the school board level has a direct impact on local businesses and will allow our community to create synergistic opportunities that improve the lives of the individuals in our community.

Q5

There continues to be a shortage of skilled labor available for various industries that are essential to economic growth. How would you suggest our community make training for high skill jobs more available to the broader population?

For many decades K-12 students and families within our community have been led to believe that continuing their formal education at the college/university level is the next step. As a school system we have a responsibility to our community to provide our students with skills needed to explore multiple options. Understanding a skilled labor force is critical to the economic growth of our community, we must develop learning opportunities and infrastructure that align our graduate's skills with the needs of our businesses, so that our students are prepared to enter our workforce and match our community opportunities. Creating community partnerships, developing courses, and providing mentorships that allow students to explore various options upon graduation will be supported.

Q6

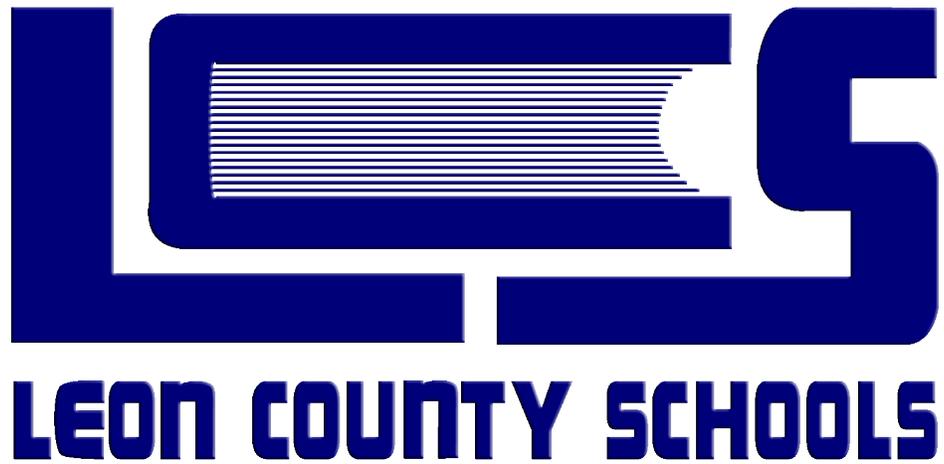
What do you believe Leon County Schools should be doing to safely and effectively educate our children during the Covid19 pandemic?

The school reopening plan must include a return that provides a safe and meaningful educational experience for ALL students, regardless of the platform and form of delivery. Every effort and resource at the disposal of the Leon County School Board must be utilized. In the absence of clear safety protocols/standards, resource allocations, and realistic contingency plans our parents and school staff are currently facing tough decisions with limited and often incomplete information. What schools need now is support, flexibility, and resources. The Leon County School Board should provide the community with a plan to a return of learning that ensures everything possible was done to keep our students, employees, and community safe.

Q7

How can businesses best engage with Leon County Schools in order to support the education of the children in our community?

Our schools are facing mounting challenges and are looking for solutions. We must look outside of our system for support in working thru the issues and barriers our educational community faces each day. Through specific, high-quality, well developed, win-win partnerships and mentorships for our student and staff will be a highlight of my work. I see problems facing our community as "spokes on a wheel", one size does not fit all. School leaders must have a firm understanding of how resources can align and be leveraged within our business community so that our efforts are most effective for our community. Many times, our challenges are the greater community challenges, and we have a responsibility as a business and educational community to work together to allocate resources that truly impact learning and the work we do every day in our schools.



Leon County Superintendent of Schools

- **Rocky Hanna**
- **Pam Hightower**
- **Keisha Washington (Did not respond)**

Rocky Hanna

rocky@rockyhanna.com

Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

Rocky Hanna, Superintendent of Schools Four years ago I made a commitment to reduce spending at the district level in order to push additional resources into our schools and classrooms while also increasing wages for both our teachers and support staff workers. Financially, I have also been committed to increasing our emergency reserve and reducing capital debt. Today, I am proud to report we have given our schools an additional 3 million dollars a year to for flexible spending and supplies, desks and equipment and to reduce the costs associated with students participating in the arts and athletics. We have also added to the staffing plan 50 security monitors to work side by side with the law enforcement officers in our schools to protect our children from potential harm. In total we have increased funding for schools by 5 million dollars a year. During this time we have also raised our minimum wage by 25 percent and given our support staff workers (bus drivers, food service workers and para professionals) a 15-20 percent pay increase. For teachers we increase the base salary by 4 percent and have committed over 8 million dollars for pay increases over the last two years. Finally, we have strengthened our emergency reserve by 40 percent, reduced capital debt by over 60 million dollars and have the Leon County School System on track to be completely debt free by the start of 2028. On the academic side of the house we have total revamped, repurposed and rebranded Lively Technical College while also making pre-k and early learning a top priority. Not to mention our graduation rate of over 93 percent is ranked fifth in the state! As you can tell I am extremely proud of the work we have done, however, the job is not yet finished. I truly believe a second term in office will allow me to finish the work I started 4 years ago and position our school district in a much better place in the years to come.

Q2

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

Student Safety and Mental Health Keeping our students safe from both physical and emotional harm will always be my top priority. After the tragic events at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14th, 2018 school safety protocols throughout the country were completely revamped. Locally, I along with members of the Leon county School Board rejected legislation to arm teachers and instead made the financial commitment to have sworn law enforcement officers at all our schools. In addition, we committed one million dollars to hire 50 security monitors to work alongside the officers. They provide additional eyes and adult supervision and can help monitor people who enter and exit our campuses. Over the last several years we have also noticed a growing number of our students who are suffering with mental health issues. Family trauma at home along with increased stress and anxiety arising from the current situation in our country both with the coronavirus and social injustice and civil unrest has only increased the level of anxiety of our children. To help our students deal with these issues we partnered with Disc Village and made a financial commitment to staff mental health counselors in all our schools. This investment will help our children deal with these issues and most probably save lives. Early learning and pre-k programs One of my top priorities since taking office has been a new and committed focus on early learning and pre-K programs. It is my belief that resources, and efforts invested on the front end before our children enter kindergarten will only increase student achievement during their k- 12 experience. Over the last 3 years our new Director of Early Childhood Educations has developed wonderful relationships and partnerships with The Early Learning Coalition, Head Start, Whole Child Leon and numerous private pre-K centers throughout the county. Two years ago, we also committed Title I dollars to support a VPK all day program for families who otherwise could not have afforded it. Closing the digital divide among students Last month we made the decision to purchase 32,500 devices (one for every student in the Leon County School System) in order to level the playing field and close the digital divide among our students. This 10.4 million dollar investment along with purchasing a new learning management system (Canvas) loaded with common course content, assignments and assessments will move our school system will

move our school system into the 21st century. In addition, this bold step forward will greatly improve our distance learning platform and get us out of being held hostage by textbook companies.

Q3

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the stagnant poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

Two years ago Mayor Dailey suggested that local governments (City of Tallahassee, Leon County and Leon County Schools) meet regularly to discuss issues we have in common such as the segregation of our community and our local schools. These meetings have done much to bring our agencies together in order to look for solutions to problems we possibly can solve together. In order to address this issue of segregation in our school district we must re-visit our school choice policies and how they are implemented. After taking office three years ago I immediately stopped the practice of giving preferential treatment to students and families who lived in certain neighborhoods in the county and those coming out of private school. These practices along with unwise zoning decisions helped accelerate the rate by which white students and families were leaving certain schools in our district and enrolling in other schools who were already well over capacity. After leveling the playing field for all our students and families and no longer overcrowding certain school's enrollment, the diversity numbers at Rickards and Godby High Schools are at new highs. Last year we also hired a Director of Marketing who is tasked with informing the community and potential new students and families of the wonderful programs we have in all our schools. Aggressively marketing our schools will only help increase diversity across the district.

Q4

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that this remains a top priority?

Providing options and career paths for students who are not on the traditional college track. During my candidacy 4 years ago I met with Leadership of the Florida Home Builders Association, who informed me of the critical shortage they were facing with a skilled work force. As an example, the average age of a carpenter in our community is 55 and there are not any younger people trained to take those jobs. After becoming Superintendent, I immediately hired a new Director and conducted a complete operational audit of our career and technical programs. Since that time, we have built strong relationships with Career Source, Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce, Tallahassee Memorial Hospital, TCC and Florida Department of Education Work Force Development. In addition, many local companies are now providing apprenticeships for our students. Director, Shelly Bell has done an outstanding job of adding and developing programs at (what is now) Lively Technical College that align to the many jobs we have in our community. Enrollment is at an all-time high and the best is yet to come.

Q5

There continues to be a shortage of skilled labor available for various industries that are essential to economic growth. How would you suggest our community make training for high skill jobs more available to the broader population?

I believe the key to solving this problem is communication and awareness for our students and the community at large. Over the last several years we have worked hard to push introductory level trade programs into all of our schools at each level, elementary, middle and high. Both Lively and TCC offer great programs that align directly to jobs in our community. Moving forward we must work collaboratively to insure we are doing all we can to promote the jobs available in our local market and the training that's being offered for individuals to compete for these jobs.

Q6**What do you believe Leon County Schools should be doing to safely and effectively educate our children during the Covid19 pandemic?**

First, I must admit this situation has created the greatest single challenge I have faced in my 32 year career with our school system. Since June the 1st my staff and I have worked extremely hard to develop a plan to safely reopen our schools in August. During our initial meetings in June we divided our large and expansive school system into multiple subsets including mental health and safety, academic continuity, technology and connectivity, transportation, food service, early learning, exception Student education, human resources and employee relations. I also made a recommendation to the Leon County School Board to purchase 32,500 laptop devices (one for every student in our school system) in order to close the digital divide, we have among the students we serve. In addition, we created a "Task Force" of individuals from outside our school system to hear the proposed plans for re-opening from each of the areas mentioned above and to give feedback. On June 30th the "Task Force" will give additional recommendations to me and members of the school board. On July the 1st we will roll our plan to our students and families as well as the community at large. On July the 13th schools began calling parents asking them what their intentions were for the fall semester given 3 options. The goal of this exercise is to give our families choices and options the best meet both their academic and health care needs. 1. Returning to Brick and Mortar/ Face to Face Instruction) traditional school with CDC Safety precautions in place. 2. School Based Digital Academy (Enrolled in home zoned or school of choice, but instruction at home with both synchronous and asynchronous instruction) 3. Leon county Virtual School (Grades 6-12) As of today we have 65 percent of our students and families who want to return and 35 percent who feel more comfortable staying at home. On July the 24th I will present our final plan for reopening to the Leon County School Board. In addition, we also have plans developed just in case the situation in Leon County with the virus gets worse and we, once again, have to retreat home.

Q7**How can businesses best engage with Leon County Schools in order to support the education of the children in our community?**

In the early 1980's a group of parents came together and formed the Foundation for Leon County Schools. Since that time the foundation has worked hard to form partnerships with local businesses and both civic and faith-based organizations in our community to help support our public schools. Internally we also have a dedicated district coordinator who oversees our business partner program. In total we have almost 750 business partners!! Additionally, many schools have worked independently to create outside support for school specific projects and needs. Two great examples of this are Tadlock Roofing and the Scott and Wallace Law Firm. The folks at Tadlock and Scott and Wallace have personally funded many food pantries in schools throughout the district to help support children in need. In addition, Scott and Wallace fund our principal of the month program to recognize school administrators for their outstanding service.

Pam Hightower

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Q1

What is your name, what office are you seeking, and why have you decided to run for in 2020?

I am Dr. Pam Hightower, a veteran educator with 40 plus years of experience. I have Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Elementary Education and a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. I have served in various capacities in Leon County: teacher, primary specialist, and assistant principal at Killlearn Lakes; principal intern at Apalachee Elementary School; principal at the former Caroline Brevard Elementary School, the former Leonard Wesson Elementary School, and Bond Elementary School; District Coordinator of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Program; and District Director of Title I and Special Services and Consultant to D and F Schools. I am the best-qualified candidate for the role of Superintendent because I am an instructional leader who understands curriculum and instruction. I have worked with Title I schools to improve their school grade from For D to C. Additionally while serving as principal at Leonard Wesson Elementary School improved its school grade from an F to a B in one year. My diverse educational experiences, leadership and managerial skills, qualifications, and track record of proven leadership success enhance my ability to serve effectively as the Superintendent. My varied experiences provided me a unique insight into understanding the needs of all of our students. These experiences range from northside Killlearn Lakes Elementary, centrally located Apalachee Elementary, west side Caroline Brevard Elementary to southside Wesson Elementary and Bond Elementary schools. My experiences at the north side, central, west side, and south side schools have provided a cross-sectional perspective of the need of the various schools. My experience of working with proven researched-based curriculum programs have equipped me with the knowledge to assist leadership in selecting and implementing proven programs that lead to student and school success. I "Care" about all students regardless of ethnicity or social-economic status. I passionately and firmly believe that all children can learn and should have a successful K-12 school experience. I am an instructional leader, a quality needed as the Superintendent of Schools. One of the most important jobs of the Superintendent is to ensure that all students are learning and achieving at high levels in a safe and caring environment. The Superintendent should be knowledgeable about the best practices for maximizing student achievement and is supportive of teachers in the district. I have an extensive background in educational leadership, curriculum and instruction, and management. Curriculum knowledge is the key to raising the level of student academic performance and achievement, which should be one of the top priorities in our school district. We are living in unprecedented times where experience, leadership, organization, and decision making is imperative. I am a candidate for Leon County Superintendent of Schools because process these qualities, see the need for change, and understand how to move the district forward. With the Superintendent, school board, schools, and community stakeholders working well together, we will make the Leon County an "A" school district!

Q2

What are your top three priorities as a candidate for public office?

Safety and Health to include Mental Health, Closing the Achievement Gap, Recruiting, and Retaining High-Quality Teachers

Q3

How do you suggest our local governments can best work to combat the stagnant poverty and economic segregation present in our community?

Our local government can breakdown exclusionary zoning practice that helps to increase the cost of housing beyond the mediums-low- and moderate-income households. Support inclusionary requiring local government and developers to include houses for the low to moderate-income households in the

community so that housing opportunities are available, which will create more integration and less segregation. Local government should provide training programs that will result in high wage jobs for the economically disadvantaged populations. Allocate resources to start businesses targeting poor neighborhoods and work with the school board to provide additional support, both human and fiscal, to assist highly minority populated and underserved schools to raise the level of student performance. The school district will provide workshops on how to become a homeowner and improving credit scores. Assisting parents to become homeowners will enable them to move out of improvised neighborhoods. Hopefully, this will transcend to their children and reduce stagnant poverty and economic segregation in the community.

Q4

Creating and maintaining a talent pipeline that addresses local workforce needs is key to supporting existing businesses. If elected, what role would you play in ensuring that this remains a top priority?

Our K-12 educational system's goal is to graduate student college and career ready. However, students select their vocational Career Paths. Within our curriculum, we offer a litany of courses that prepare students for the workforce beyond high school if they do not select college or the military. The more vocational oriented students are provided the opportunity to attend Lively Vocational College to receive training and certification in various career fields. I will continue to offer and expand opportunities for vocational training that will support existing businesses.

Q5

There continues to be a shortage of skilled labor available for various industries that are essential to economic growth. How would you suggest our community make training for high skill jobs more available to the broader population?

The School District, City, and County Government should work to provide training programs that will develop the skills of individuals to meet the shortage of skilled laborers. The School district can support these initiatives for training through Lively Vocational Technical College. Lively offers a variety of programs that prepares students and adults for high skills and essential jobs. The program offers flexible schedules of day or evening classes. The offering can be expanded based upon the needs of the community and workforce. Tallahassee Community has a workforce development program as well. There are many training possibilities available. The community and businesses should provide incentives and support for training to meet the workforce needs.

Q6

What do you believe Leon County Schools should be doing to safely and effectively educate our children during the Covid19 pandemic?

The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought about the need for educators to think and plan in an unprecedented way to serve and educate our students safely, effectively, and efficiently during these critical times. We must have a clear vision and a plan to move the district forward that is inclusive and equitable and provides quality education for all students in critical times as well as "normal" times. Even if schools are safe enough for students to return, they will look very different. There must be a plan to shift more of the instruction from classroom-based learning to blended or distance learning. The options of plans may include in-person learning, distance learning, digital academy, and hybrid learning. If the coronavirus numbers improve drastically or a vaccine arrives in the fall or winter, the school system could pivot to a more in-person model. However, if the numbers worsen, it could push the district to shift to a more virtual setting than it originally planned. We must prepare for each model and communicate with all stakeholders. To develop the plan, we must have input from all stakeholders: parents (representative of all schools) teachers (across schools and disciplines), administrators (school and district) students (high school), all support staff (school and district), medical experts, law enforcement (district, city, and county),

and collegiate and community members. Each group brings a different perspective to the table. Building a diverse team of stakeholders helps us to communicate better and contemplate how others will be affected. Making better decisions on the front end means there will be less need to revisit or change the decisions later. The following efforts should be taken to keep our families, teachers, and staff safe: • Keep abreast of the latest CDC and science experts' guidelines and data; • Develop social distancing plans following the CDC guidelines for movement around the campus (i.e., hallways, bathrooms, gymnasiums, playgrounds, changing classes, cafeterias and media centers (if utilized), morning entry, and afternoon dismissal); • Purchase and develop guidelines for wearing masks on the bus and at school; • Purchase thermometers to conduct daily temperature checks on all students, employees, and anyone entering the district or school buildings; • Purchase and place directional signs around the campus; • Identify the outdoor areas for students and employees to social distance and take breaks from wearing masks (especially person with asthmas to other respiratory issues); • Remove or develop sanitization plans for water fountains; • Gather information and plan for students and employees with medical vulnerabilities (i.e., masks, learning model, and any specialized resources needed at school or at home to meet their needs); • Train counselors and employ mental health counselors to address the needs that existed before COVID-19 and the trauma students experienced during the pandemic; • Purchase supplies and personal protective equipment to give to students and staff who do not have their own; • Develop plans for extra-curricular activities and athletics following the Florida High School Athletic Association guidelines; • Purchase cleaning supplies for classroom teachers (i.e., wipes, disinfectant supplies, masks, and gloves); • Develop a cleaning checklist that the custodial staff will complete and keep in a "visible place," indicating the area has been thoroughly clean and disinfected; • Train the custodial staff on how to conduct regular walkthroughs during the school day to identify areas that may require additional cleaning (i.e., office area, door handles, high-touch surfaces, and restrooms); • Provide professional development for all employees (technology, proper hygiene care, health, and safety); and • Develop procedures to address a student, an employee, or a family member that contracts COVID-1 - specifying how testing, tracking, and reporting will be conducted to minimize the spread of the virus and keep everyone safe. As we move forward with a 2020 - 2021 School Reopening Plan, the top priorities should be safety, mental health, learning recovery, closing the achievement gap, and addressing the digital divide. Decisions about reopening should all be guided by the latest recommendations provided by the CDC, orders from state and local government, as well as consultations with health care professionals. However, the United States President, the Federal Education Secretary, as well as Florida Governor and the Florida Commissioner of Education have ordered schools to open in August. It is critically important that students return to school, but they must do so in a safe manner for the health and welfare of parents, employees, and the students themselves. Serious consideration must be given to students starting the school year in some form of online learning if we are not ready from a health standpoint and a planning standpoint to open schools safely.

Q7

How can businesses best engage with Leon County Schools in order to support the education of the children in our community?

Businesses can create partnerships and build relationships with the Chamber and school district to support our schools and students. Companies can help by investing in our schools by joining forces to increase cooperation and collaboration. Businesses can provide classroom volunteers, classroom material and supplies, clothing, on the job training for students, monetary resources, create career connections, provide speakers and presenters, provide high school students the opportunity to learn local businesses through internships and apprenticeships.