



CHAMPAIGN COUNTY'S BUSINESS EMPOWERED PAC

Champaign County's Business Empowered Political Action Committee endorses and supports pro-business candidates who are running for public office. Prior to making these endorsements, candidates are asked questions about issues important to the local business community. Please take the survey below and limit answers to 150 words or less per question. If necessary, you may use additional pages. Please hand deliver or mail your responses to: Champaign County's Business Empowered PAC, 303 W Kirby Ave., Champaign, IL 61820 by 5 p.m. on Thursday, October 5, or e-mail to Public Policy Director, Garret Hill, at garreth@champaigncounty.org.

Disclaimer: The PAC and the Chamber are not responsible for any survey(s) lost as a result of the U.S. Post Office or electronic/technological issues.

1. Do you support the County Executive form of Government? Why or why not?

Yes. Despite the temporary uncertainties as we transition to a new way of doing business, I envision the benefits of having an elected official to represent the County's interests in business development and interagency agreements and to lead the County Board as it develops a shared vision for the future. Should we take advantage of it, working through the change will provide the opportunity to evaluate and improve the way decisions are made and the effectiveness of those decisions (streamline, more inclusive, more transparent, more effective, and more productive).

2. What are the pros and cons of the County Executive form of government?

This form of government offers checks and balances to County Board deliberations and decisions through the ability of an elected official on equal footing to bring alternate proposals

to the table for Board consideration, take a bigger-picture approach to problem-solving by representing a countywide constituency, help the board develop a shared vision, solicit community support or opposition for policies and if necessary, use veto power over Board resolutions.

The transition will consume time and effort to change the way the county operates, which could delay county business if the Executive and Board get entrenched in conflict or procedural issues. Adding the County Executive Office requires adjusting the budget in other areas to accommodate the official's salary, and due to the statute, could potentially require moving funds for legal and other support for the Executive that would impact other budgeted items.

3. Do you have any prior business experience relevant to serving in this capacity?

My experience leading organizational change as a board member, consultant, trainer and public administrator includes public and private organizations addressing mergers, downsizing, takeovers, restructuring, and new business start-up. I am prepared to manage the issues that will arise with Champaign County's transition to a new form of government.

Through 15 years as Champaign County Regional Planning Commission's Community Services Director and 3 years as lead partner for the local Illinois workNet Center, I am familiar with county administration, the county budget, county staff, government regulations, workforce and economic development issues in Champaign and surrounding counties.

I gained knowledge of facility construction, demolition, renovation and re-purposing through my national consulting work for health care and justice organizations, as well as holding advanced degrees in architecture and city planning. I can effectively oversee the serious facility challenges facing the county.

I have significant experience with diverse constituencies and making interagency projects happen.

4. Many of the issues facing Champaign County today can be connected to past county boards' failure to plan for the long term. What is your long term plan for facilities, including deferred maintenance, the county nursing home, jail and Brookens Center?

In order to provide quality, effective and efficient services, the county must provide adequate and reliable infrastructure. Proactive planning for maintenance and replacement costs is always less expensive in the long term than addressing these items on an emergency basis. I will prepare budgets that will reflect ongoing maintenance integral to operations, so that there is a realistic expectation of the costs associated with providing each department's services.

I will lead the Board, with public participation, to extend the county's strategic plan from a 2-year timeframe to a 6-year timeframe. In addition, the county's facility condition assessment and IT road map will be incorporated, so that the strategic plan includes not only goals, but also associated budget, facility and IT components that will be required to reach them. This will provide a coherent vision to strive toward and a framework upon which to base annual program and budget decisions to maintain, renovate, re-purpose or sell each facility.

5. In April 2017, voters in Champaign County voted down a referendum to increase property taxes to fund the Champaign County Nursing Home and voted in favor of a referendum to authorize the sale of the nursing home. Do you believe it is the will of the people to sell the nursing home? What would be your first steps to address the nursing home's future?

A majority of 20% of registered voters indicating that they authorize the County Board to consider sale as a viable option is not an overwhelming mandate by county residents, however the option of sale certainly should be on the table for consideration.

Last year county revenues showed a large reduction in fine/fee collection, which impacted general funds almost as much as the nursing home required for cash flow. A zero-based budget exercise, currently planned for 2020, is needed soon to change the discussion from focus on only one department to one of determining county spending priorities and strategy for the future.

In the event of sale, I would negotiate terms that would prevent disruption of residents, provide a smooth staff transition, and result in payment that would eliminate outstanding accounts payable, repay loans to the general fund and pay for demolition of the old vacant county nursing home.

6. Businesses in Champaign County have recently been dealt multiple tax and fee increases as job providers to our community by numerous taxing bodies in the county. As Executive, what measures would you take to freeze or reduce costs on area businesses?

There is a positive relationship between taxes and the quality of services and amenities being paid for by those taxes. I am interested in local governments and other taxing bodies working better together to review the overall tax burden for our county businesses and consider ways to keep Champaign County and its municipalities desirable places to establish businesses while maintaining the quality of life in our communities.

I will identify where intergovernmental agreements might reduce operating costs for units of government with regard to shared IT infrastructure, workforce recruiting and training, insurance coverage or other administrative costs, thus keeping taxes lower. There are also

opportunities to expand shared business development initiatives through the Economic Development Council, Illinois workNet Center, Regional Planning Commission, local Chambers of Commerce, the University of Illinois, Parkland College and local business incubators. Growing the number of businesses would spread out the tax burden.

7. Do you support a property tax freeze? Why or why not?

At this time, I would not support a property tax freeze. The county already has tax caps and is struggling to keep up with rising costs for the services it provides and has deferred facility maintenance for several years. The county's taxes are a small portion of the total tax amount that the county collects for various taxing bodies. As long as the cost of living rises, it will be difficult for the county to provide quality services if its revenues are frozen.

I do support codification of county ordinances, a review of current statutory requirements for each department, and continuous evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of county services in order to eliminate practices and paperwork that are no longer needed and keep costs at a minimum for taxpayers.

8. The sale of the Champaign County Nursing Home could lead to a large property tax reduction for area businesses. Do you support the current tax levy on the nursing home to be returned to businesses and residents in Champaign County? Why or why not?

The county has loaned the nursing home several million dollars in past, much of which has been forgiven in previous years due to past circumstances. These funds were borrowed from the county's general and capital replacement funds, which could have been used for many other county infrastructure projects that are now suffering from lack of annual maintenance or upgrades to maintain quality of services. Should the nursing home be sold, I would support taking care of these deferred projects before totally eliminating the levy, however some reduction in the levy may be possible in future.

9. How can the county address overcrowding at the downtown jail? As Executive, would you place a referendum on the ballot for a tax increase to fund expansions to the county's jail facilities?

I support the Sheriff vacating the downtown jail and selling the building as soon as possible. A plan for temporary relocation of the prisoners and Sheriff's staff, and the costs associated with this relocation, must be developed soon to avoid the major expense of renovations for ADA compliance that would be required to remain in the building. Significant additional maintenance for facility safety would be required for the building to remain occupied.

I do not believe that a referendum is necessary. Proceeds from sale of the downtown site will reimburse relocation costs and fund the re-configuration of the satellite facility to incorporate special population offenders, offices and space for mental health and other services. Long-term efficiencies in operations can also be gained by consolidating the jail space, saving future costs.

10. The creation of this new form of government has been controversial with county board members. What will you do to help heal the hard feelings on the board to help move the county forward?

Change is difficult, particularly if it is felt to be imposed. It is important that all board members be engaged in developing new methods of operation with the County Executive, and that procedures for preparing the budget and making appointments be established in a way that will build consensus toward shared goals, rather than polarizing decision-making.

Reaching out to understand differences of opinion is important to me, as is paying attention to team-building and mutual respect. The Executive's ability to veto board decisions can be a major tool for implementing change. My goal is not to use veto power to force decisions, but use it to build consensus in decision-making so the board can move forward on important projects that will help the county thrive.

11. If you had to define your platform for this position, what is that platform?

As County Executive, I will extend the county's strategic plan to 6 years and connect it to annual action plans, budgets and performance measures for accountability. I will focus on restoring the county fund balance, county facility issues, regional economic development, interagency partnerships and workforce development strategies that improve the county's ability to serve businesses and residents with quality and cost-effective services. I will model fairness and inclusion in decision-making, including appointments and redistricting activities that will fall during my term in office.

There is no question 12.

13. Gerrymandering is an unfortunate practice in all levels of government. How can you address this at the county level, if elected?

During the term of the first County Executive, political redistricting will occur. To build voter trust and board integrity, a process for independently drawing district maps is imperative. The goal is to provide a framework by which all voters can be fairly represented in county decision-making. I support a process by which consensus can be reached by a committee of representatives selected by both parties and other non-partisan appointees.

14. How much of the county nursing home's financial difficulties were due to the delay in state payments versus mismanagement by the county and their contracted management firm. Please be specific.

Delays in state payments have been occurring for over 4 years and have gotten worse in that time. Delays in approval for Medicaid for qualified residents have been occurring for over 3 years, and also have gotten worse as the state budget worsens. These created cash flow issues.

The management firm did not practice cost-effective subcontract management and passed along these elevated costs to the county. It did not apprise the board of census and billing problems for at least 2 years after problems began to arise with revenue. These created deficit spending issues.

The Nursing Home Advisory Board, Treasurer and Auditor's offices were slow to notice problems with revenue and accounts payable. When the board was alerted, it was slow to determine where problems were and arrive at solutions to begin correcting them. Performance monitoring tools should be implemented to improve oversight for any service that is subcontracted by the county.

15. Do you have any experience supervising union employees? Negotiating union contracts?

I have worked in companies and organizations that employed union workers and have been party to pre-negotiation management meetings, but other managers directly supervised union employees and negotiated their contracts.

Please use this space for any notes you would like to explain any of your responses further:

I love Champaign County. We moved here over 20 years ago, because this county was a good place to raise our family, and I want that to continue to be so for our children.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my thoughts on the important issues facing the business community in the county at this time.

Please note that if more information is needed for a potential endorsement, you will be invited to interview with the Business Empowered PAC's board of directors. Interviews will be held October 9-12. Please indicate which day would work best for your interview. Failure to turn survey's in by the October 5 deadline will result in an automatic disqualification from a potential interview.

October 9 _____

October 10 _____

October 12 _____ noon-4:00 PM

October 16 ___X___

October 17 _____

October 19 _____ noon-4:00 PM

Surveys must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 5, 2017.

Return of this survey implies permission for your answers to be posted on the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce website and/or *Commerce Connection* newsletter. The PAC board reserves the right to edit all responses which exceed the 150 word restriction for the purpose of print space constraints in our publications.