



**Candidate Questionnaire
Monroe County Commissioners - District 3**

About DFMC

Democracy for Monroe County (DFMC) is a political action committee dedicated to recruiting, training, and supporting fiscally responsible and socially progressive candidates at the local and state levels. DFMC is part of a nationwide coalition of grassroots groups allied with Democracy for America, the political action committee inspired by the presidential campaign of Howard Dean. We meet every first Thursday of the month. For more information about our organization, visit our website at www.democracyformonroecounty.org.

DFMC: Building and training the progressive grassroots.

Please return this questionnaire to chair@democracyformonroecounty.org by Monday, March 21st either in written form at our forum on that date, or send it to robertdeppert@gmail.com and to wellsec01@bluemarble.net.

About You

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List of your support or campaign committee members:

Kitty Liell, Regina Moore, Charlotte Zietlow, Isabel Piedmont-Smith, Dorothy Granger, Lisa Borrero, Kate Wiltz, Victoria Burke, Catherine Dyar, Allison Chopra, Deke Hager, Don Moore, John Barge, Jonna Capio, Beth Sarchet, Wendy Corning, Lillian Henegar

Question 1

Why are you running for office?

In short, because I've lived here all my life, I'm concerned about our county and I want to make a difference.

My road to public service started thirty years ago when my mom took me to the MCDP Headquarters to stuff envelopes for a candidate for County Council. I've taken those values of helping others with me as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, mom and proud progressive.

The health of Monroe County has been downgraded for the second consecutive year. I want to change that. With the changes in the coding of felons, the State of Indiana has placed more responsibility on the counties to handle our nonviolent offenders. I'm the only candidate in this race who has experience counseling individuals in the criminal justice system and I know what their needs are.

And we must be vigilant in protecting our environment. I believe the Commissioners have a responsibility to reduce our carbon footprint by reducing our waste, working with the city on water quality, and ensuring sensible planning.

Finally, as the only candidate who voluntarily attends weekly Commissioner Staff Time, I have a unique sense of what is needed in the Commissioner's office. I want to bring respect, transparency and openness. I want to make sure all residents feel heard and respected. And the County employees, who are the backbone of our government, deserve to be recognized for great service.

If elected, I promise to commit the time needed to serve our county with respect, kindness and a sense of optimism. I have a tested record of commitment to our community and I want to see these goals through!

Question 2

List your political experience (here and elsewhere), including any grassroots activity in which you participated or led.

1980 and 1990's: I volunteered on several campaigns as a teenager making calls, handling out literature at the polls, stuffing envelopes and driving residents to the polls.

At IU: I served on the Sustainability Committee, the Workers Rights Consortium, was the Chair of the Women's Student Association, on the Executive Board of the Volunteer Student Bureau, member of the College Dems, and a member of NARAL. In these roles, I went to a March on Washington for abortion rights, organized many events, and registered students to vote. I was also a Fundraising Captain for Planned Parenthood.

2000: I was a Delegate to the State and National Conventions. I was a teaching intern and helped teach a class called “Sexual Politics”. I also did general volunteering for the Democratic Party making phone calls and helping with mailings.

2001-2003: I was in graduate school in Austin, Texas. During those years, I was the lead student in a Presidential Commission that researched mental health parity.

I was also a performer in the Vagina Monologues and participated actively in the Social Justice Action group on my campus. We organized social justice events and brought in speakers.

From 2004-2011: I worked as a community mental health worker helping citizens in poverty with mental health issues. In this role, I worked on boards and commissions related to addiction, postpartum, nicotine addiction and youth services.

2012: Cheryl Munson Campaign for County Council: canvassing, sign coordinator

2012: Sophia Travis Campaign: Briefly helped her with fundraising

2012: Joined the Democratic Women’s Caucus Steering Committee and the Commission on the Status of Women. I've served on the DWC Nominations, Membership, Endorsement, Communications and Fundraising Committees.

2013: Appointed to the Monroe County Women’s Commission

2013: Cofounded the “Friends of Sophia Travis” nonprofit and in 2015, we installed the Women in Government Plaza on the courthouse lawn using local materials and a local artist.

2014/2015: Volunteer for Hamilton campaign for Mayor (canvassing, signs, phone bank)

Volunteer for Guthrie for City Council (signs, canvassing)

Volunteer for Isabel Piedmont-Smith for CC: (Treasurer)

I've also been an informal support to multiple candidates since 2012 in my role on the DWC Steering Committee.

Question 3

In what way(s) do you consider yourself socially progressive?

I have spent my entire life advocating for progressive causes. I’m also in my sixth year as a public school volunteer-I consider this to be something I am most proud of. I believe in order to be progressive you have to be willing to learn and I’m not afraid to say “I was wrong about that”, or to change my mind given new information! I think it's pretty amazing to evolve and continue to grow. Having kids and counseling with teenagers helps me do that!-

Question 4

Describe your ideas for engaging citizens in more active participation in our community and our government.

-I support the Commissioner's plan to use social media to engage and educate more residents. The platform will be called "Speak Up Monroe County". If elected, I would be a leader in making that project successful.

-I support Commissioner Thomas's goal of having a "County Graduate School". As a graduate of the Monroe County Citizen's Academy, I have the experience to make that program reach a wider variety of people and some of it should be online so all residents have the opportunity to benefit. I would also reach out to high school and middle school students and consider organizing a "County Youth Citizen's Academy". And there is no reason we can't coordinate with the city on great programs to engage and educate our citizens!

-We don't have enough diversity on our boards and commissions. Each board and commission needs to have a "point person" who is responsible for outreach and can be the liaison with the council and commissioners to make sure people's applications aren't overlooked. And those who sit on the commissions ought to be sitting in on interviews with prospective candidates. I'd like to see a "Boards and Commissions Day" organized with the city to let residents see what each commission does. I'd reach out to local schools and Ivy Tech and I.U. to see if we could get more youthful representation. I also plan to coordinate with the City's mayoral, common council and clerk's offices. If someone expresses an interest in a county board but there are no openings, we ought to be talking with the city to see if they have a need. We could be doing such a better job collaborating!

-Currently, there are no Commissioners that hold regular resident meetings. I'd change that. I would offer "office hours" to engage residents more frequently. I'd be willing to offer Skype sessions, as well to reach out to people who might have transportation issues.

-The Commissioners office hears a great deal of resident concerns and disputes. I would advocate that one Commissioner is always designated to follow and track each dispute and coordinate with the Commissioner office staff to make sure we are held accountable to our constituents.

Question 5

Do you pledge to publicly support all Democratic Party nominees, including your primary opponent(s), should he/she prevail in the May Primary Election?

I'm a team player and will of course work towards the common good of protecting our environment, advancing social causes and working for equality for all.

Question 6

Do you believe the "Open Door Law" should be followed when conducting public policy (Yes or No)? If yes, what are your specific plans to make sure that the "Open Door Law" is followed and adhered to?

Yes! At all times and without exception, I support the Open Door Law as it is truly transparency in action.

Both as a member on a county commission, as a vice precinct chair for the MCDP and a professional who adheres to Federal Laws that protect patients, I have the experience, respect and understanding for laws that are written to engage our citizens and to protect them.

As a member on a 3-person board, I will follow the Open Door Law and will refer any citizens to the PAC (Public Access Counselor) should they have any concerns about any public officials or groups go are no following these laws.

Question 7

Should “Staff Time Meetings” which occur on Tuesdays at 2:00 pm be changed to early evenings so that the working public can actually attend and participate in public policy decisions; and, should CATS (Cable Access Television Services) be allowed to film those meetings and broadcast them on TV? Explain how you will make our county government more open and transparent?

I could not be more happy that you asked this question. I am the only candidate who voluntarily attends Staff Time, and I have been observing carefully each week with these kinds of questions in mind. We should always be focused on making sure our government is as open and transparent as it can be.

That being said, I support:

-Keeping Staff Time at the same time so that county staff can resolve pressing issues during office hours. Frequently during those meetings, one of the office staff will leave to contact another office to answer a question. If the meeting were in the evening, I don't think urgent business—which is what Staff Time is for—would get resolved as quickly.

-I would support CATS taping staff time meetings.

- I would support changing the Friday Commissioner meeting to the evening so more residents can attend. The Commissioners must meet every two weeks to approve payroll and claims so there is no reason, aside from logistical issues for their space, that they couldn't change the meeting time to accommodate more.

-During Staff Time, there is not currently public comment. I would recommend allotting a few minutes at the end of the meeting for public questions and comments.

Question 8

What experiences do you have in communicating with business leaders about making their businesses more economical for both them and for our community? How will you bring in new businesses that pay good, living wage salaries, without using a Tax Abatement, or using a TIFD (Tax Incremental Finance District)

I think we need a fresh perspective to examine new ideas. I'll bring my experience as a small business owner to the county.

I have some experience in business as I am a small business owner – one that has been successful with a 100% payment record from my clients, a rarity in almost any business! I've mentored several other therapists in creating and operating their own sole practices. To this date all have been successful.

Looking at the business community as a whole, we need to revisit the tools that state and federal government give us to attract development and jobs that might accompany it. This examination takes a conversation with city and county officials, private developers and the public to evaluate and analyze their use in our community as a whole.

New models are constantly being created and developed across the country, and we should be able to look at those new ideas and how they might fit our community priorities and needs. The recent Ball State study is a perfect example of dispelling some long held beliefs on TiFs and tax abatement programs.

We need to:

- Support projects that improve and maintain our quality of life.
- Support growth and business where there is already existing infrastructure.
- Help establish walkable communities that will attract great local businesses.
- Advocate for the State Legislature to expand our bus system to a larger area in the county. Transportation continues to be a top concern in our county!
- Support all initiatives at any level of government that increase the minimum wage to an actual living wage. As someone who has lived off of minimum wage jobs, I completely understand the struggle to survive. It's not even paycheck to paycheck-- for many it's day to day.