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**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](http://www.democracyformonroecounty.org).

*DFMC: Building and training the progressive grassroots.*

**Please return this questionnaire to [chair@democracyformonroecounty.org](mailto:chair@democracyformonroecounty.org) by Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup> either in written form at our forum on that date, or send it to [robertdeppert@gmail.com](mailto:robertdeppert@gmail.com) and to [wellsec01@bluemarble.net](mailto:wellsec01@bluemarble.net).**

**About You**

Name: Rick Dietz

Preferred email address: [rick@electrick.org](mailto:rick@electrick.org)

Website (if available): [electrick.org](http://electrick.org)

List of your support or campaign committee members:

- Committee
  - Ethan Horvath
  - Gregory Travis
  - Barbara McKinney
  - Mike Szakaly
  - Debby Herbenick
  - Ryan Conway
  - Danielle McClelland
  - William McConnell
- Endorsements
  - David Keppel, Lee Jones, Susan Sandberg and many others scheduled to roll out in the next few weeks.

## Question 1

### **Why are you running for office?**

Monroe County is an amazing place and it's been my home for over 25 years. For 15 of those years I have been a volunteer, precinct committee member, or officer in the Monroe County Democratic Party, including 4 years serving as Monroe County Democratic Party Chair. I've served 4 years on the Monroe County Council where I led on issues of importance to our community including energy conservation, funding for social services, opposition to RFRA's discrimination against the GLBT community, and bringing our County budget into balance.

It is a great challenge to maintain a community, city, state, or nation, and its quality of life over time. In the face of change, how do we hold onto the community we love? Monroe County faces significant challenges in the coming years that will shape our future: I-69, economic cycles (growth and recession), development pressures & sprawl, unemployment/underemployment, poverty, environmental pressures, and more.

The Commissioners have a powerful role in our politics and a responsibility for charting the County's course. The Board of Commissioners is essentially the executive branch *and* the legislative branch of

County government. (It's more complicated than that, but the Commissioners are essentially team-Mayors for the County, with the ability to both write laws and execute them.) If you care about the future of Monroe County you should care about the Commissioners race. The Commissioners will be making important decisions that shape the future of our community, of our lives, and those of our children and future generations.

I am the father of a beautiful and inquisitive baby girl and one of the most compelling reasons I am running is to ensure Monroe County remains the kind of community my daughter would like to live in someday when that choice is hers. This campaign is about our future. I hope you'll join me in protecting the progressive Monroe County we are now and building the progressive Monroe County we should be.

## Question 2

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

### **Political Involvement and Public Office**

- *Council Member District 4*, Monroe County Council, 2011 - 2015
- *Delegate*, Indiana 9th Congressional District, Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, NC, Sept 2012
- *Party Chair*, Monroe County Democratic Party, Spring 2009 - 2013
- *Party Vice Chair*, Monroe County Democratic Party, Spring 2007 - Spring 2009
- *Party Secretary*, Monroe County Democratic Party, Summer 2006 - Spring 2007
- *Party Committee Service*, Monroe County Democratic Party Executive Committee, Technology Committee, Communications Committee, GOTV Committee, 2000 - 2006
- *Campaign Committee Member* 2003, Mark Kruzan for Mayor.
- *Campaign Committee Member* 2003, Susan Sandberg for Council.
- *Campaign Manager* 2002, Bill Abbott for US Congress, Indiana's 4th Congressional District.
- **Monroe County Election Worker**, May 2002
- *Volunteer*, Monroe County Democratic Party, 2000 – Present

### **Monroe County Council Board & Commission Service**

- Monroe County Emergency Management Advisory Council 2015
- *Convention & Visitors Commission*, 2014 - 2015
- *Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, Ex-Officio representative*, 2014 - 2015

- *Downtown Bloomington, Inc. Board of Directors, 2012 - 2015*
- *Tech Services Advisory Board, 2012 - 2013*
- *Environmental Quality and Sustainability Commission, 2012 - 2013*
- *Bloomington Economic Development Corporation BEDC Executive Committee, 2012 – 2013*

#### **Citizen Board & Commission Appointments**

- *Bloomington Telecommunications Council Member, Sep. 2003 - Nov. 2004*
- *Bloomington Digital Underground Advisory Committee, Mar. 2004 - Nov. 2004*
- *Bloomington Environmental Commission, Mar. 2004 - Nov. 2004*

#### **Not-for-profit Service**

- *Humanetrix Foundation, Inc. - co-Founder, former President, Board Member, 2001 - Present*
- *IU School of Informatics and Computing Serve IT Community Information Technology Clinic - Advisory Board, 2010 - Present*
- *Local First Bloomington - Advisory Board, 2009 - 2013*
- *WFHB Community Radio - Citizen Advisory Board, 2010 - 2012*
- *Primary Coordinator - Emergency Support Function 2 (ESF2), Communications and Warning, under the Monroe County Emergency Management Plan, Nov. 2004 - 2010.*
- *Lotus Festival Volunteer, 2002 – 2010*

#### **Other**

- *Monroe County Citizens' Academy, 2006-2007*
- *Bloomington Police Department Citizen Police Academy, 2005*
- *Leadership Bloomington Monroe County, 2003-2004*
- *City of Bloomington Citizens' Academy, 2002*

#### **Grassroots Action**

- *Citizens Toolkit online information resource for Monroe County voters. (Approximately 2000-2006)*
- *Protests*
  - *George W. Bush Inauguration*
  - *Protest prior to 2<sup>nd</sup> Gulf War in New York City*
  - *Marriage Equality protest wedding in Bloomington at Buskirk-Chumley*
  - *Many other Statehouse and local rallies*
- *Many public comments at City and County meetings*
- *Neighborhood association involvement with Prospect Hill, Maple Heights, Near West Side, McDoel Gardens over the years.*
- *Member of DFMC for a number of years (not certain about length)*

### Question 3

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

I came into local politics through nonviolent protest. After the Bush v. Gore Supreme Court travesty I went to Washington DC to join the largest anti-inauguration protest since Nixon. When I returned home from Bush's inauguration and realized there was a near-complete media blackout of the scale of the protests, I knew I needed to invest my energy in making positive change at home in my own community. I got involved right away with the local Democratic Party.

I'm a liberal Democrat. I am a progressive Democrat. I have a demonstrated track record in public office serving on the Monroe County Council for 4 years. For more than 15 years, I've worked in Monroe County for progressive causes, Democratic candidates and the Monroe County Democratic Party. While serving on the Monroe County Council I had the opportunity to put my social values into action in elected office for all to see. I voted to increase the county's Social Services Grants Fund and wrote the Resolution to name it after my friend, former Council member Sophia Travis. I voted in support of Planned Parenthood funding for 4 straight years, and in the face of vitriolic protest in 2015. I established the County's conservation fund, feeding energy efficiency savings back into new energy efficiency investments. I strongly support LGBT rights and authored the County Council's resolution opposing Governor Pence's discriminatory and disastrous RFRA legislation. I stood proudly onstage at the Buskirk-Chumley theater ceremony in defiance of Indiana law at a protest wedding for same-sex couples.

I support equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Even as some improvements have been achieved in LGBT rights, it is all the more clear that there is so much more that needs to be done to address institutional racism, sexism and bigotry of all sorts throughout the Country. I am pro-choice and I support equal rights, equal treatment and equal pay for women. My mother, wife, friends, colleagues and my daughter all deserve no less than the full measure of equality.

Many people equate being a social progressive with support for civil rights or being liberal on "social issues". To me social progressivism is about a willingness to challenge societal norms, to believe that change is possible and desirable, and that where our society is flawed we can fix it; and not only that, we have the opportunity and the honor to do so. I believe our government should be an instrument of social justice and positive change: for those who are poor, sick, lacking shelter, imprisoned, and for everyone needing help to achieve the best in themselves and the best for their families.

### Question 4

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

The foundation of democracy is citizen participation. Thankfully we have an active and engaged community in Monroe County. We care about our schools (Please support the referendum!), we have

a robust not-for-profit sector which does such important work, and we citizens get involved in the work of government every day.

But there is always more that can be done to expand avenues for participation. Here are some things Monroe County should do to promote citizen engagement:

- Explore participatory budgeting to assess community budget priorities
- Improve the user experience on the Monroe County website
- Post Monroe County data online in an organized open data portal
- Adopt an Open311 citizen issues reporting system like Bloomington's uReport/GeoReporter app
- Hold Commissioner regular meetings at a more accessible time

What citizens can do:

- Run for public office
- Apply to a government board or commission
- Attend government meetings
- Comment at public meetings
- Contact your elected officials
- Volunteer for a not for profit or a political organization

We also need to recognize that not everyone wants greater engagement with government. Many have their own professional projects and personal responsibilities. Many just want government to work without it requiring their own intervention beyond elections. We need to provide robust opportunities for those seeking greater engagement, but we also need to ensure that government does its job efficiently and effectively.

### **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?**

Yes, I will be supporting the Democratic Party ticket. As a party leader for 8 years, including Chairperson for 4, I know how important it is to work as a team. I know that our shared Democratic values are advanced by working together.

## 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, I absolutely agree that the Open Door Law (ODL) should be followed. It’s the law. Period. In Indiana, all meetings of governing bodies are required to be properly noticed in advance and open to allow the public to both observe and record. I don’t have a specific plan in this regard because to act otherwise is illegal. It simply must be done. As a Commissioner I would work with the County Legal Department to periodically remind board and commission members of public notice and open meeting requirements, although I believe these requirements continue to be taken very seriously, just as they were when I was serving on the Monroe County Council.

## 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 think it is appropriate for the Commissioners to be able to meet with staff during the work day when County staff are present at work and may need to consult with the Commissioners. Staff Time Meetings also serve as “office hours” for the Commissioners so they can deal with the day to day operations of County government and interact with employees as a team. Nearly any time the Commissioners are scheduled to meet it is required to be a properly noticed and public meeting under the Open Door Law. This is the case when meetings occur during the work day or afterward. To the extent possible I think the Commissioners should keep Staff Time Meetings to information gathering and operational discussions, and leave policy votes for regular Board of Commissioners meetings.

As Commissioner I would welcome CATS (Community Access Television Services) to record Staff Time Meetings. CATS is under contract with Monroe County to automatically cover certain meetings of County government and to cover others when invited. All of the Open Door Law requirements apply to Staff Time Meetings so any member of the public can attend and record the meeting regardless of the Commissioners’ arrangements with CATS. But I think the Commissioners should invite CATS to record. There is often a Herald-Times reporter present at these meetings so I don’t see a problem with CATS being present to record.

This isn’t the focus of your question, but I think it’s more important for the Commissioners to hold their regular meetings at a time more accessible to the public. I believe these meetings should be in the evenings not during work day mornings.

Citizen engagement and government transparency go hand in hand. We need a Courthouse where everyone feels welcome. The Office of the Commissioners belongs to the people and should be wide open and inviting for all. I will work to create a culture of openness and transparency in the Commissioners office and I invite you to join me.

For other ideas on openness and transparency please see question #4.

## 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)?**

Our business community is very diverse – it ranges from large international corporations to small business, artists and musicians, and from decades old firms to newly minted start-ups. Government economic incentives such as tax abatements and TIF districts can be useful tools but are rarely the deciding factor in business relocation, expansion, or founding. The most important asset we have for growing local businesses and attracting new businesses is our community’s overall quality of life. Maintaining that quality of life and our community’s uniqueness has to be at the heart of our decisions around economic development and planning. We also need to develop a more resilient and self-sustaining local economy. We have not seen the last recession and we need to be prepared for the next. An economy that recirculates more of its dollars locally will be better prepared for economic shocks than others. An increasingly resilient local economy, a high caliber labor pool, and a quality living environment is a hard combination to beat.

I have been involved in a number of business organizations while on the Council Council including the BEDC, the local Chamber, and Downtown Bloomington Inc. And I’m proud to have been a founding board member of Local First Bloomington. Local First is a tremendous organization advocating for homegrown locally-based businesses. I am also a co-founder of Stranger’s Hill Organics and Cardinal Spirits, two local businesses. I’m not directly involved in the day-to-day operations of either business these days but I do meet periodically with managing partners. I also founded a technology consulting sole-proprietorship in 2000 that has been on hiatus since 2005. This background gives me a very good understanding of the challenges of operating a business in Monroe County.

Noted progressive President Teddy Roosevelt extolled “the chance to work hard at work worth doing.” Protecting our community and charting a progressive future is that kind of work. As Commissioner I will work hard for our community, just as I am working for your vote right now.