

Livingston County Democratic Executive Committee

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For Immediate Release

Democratic Commission Candidates:

We'll Tackle County's Problems, Not Fight Divisive Culture Wars

The nine women running as Democrats for County Commission say they will focus on the County's business rather than engage in divisive culture wars over issues outside the Commission's purview, the candidates said in a release for Monday.

"For too long, our County Commission has played to a narrow fringe of voters rather than tackling the problems that stand in the way of a better life for all of us. Many in our community care strongly, and differ sharply, about guns, abortion, and pandemic science. But the Commission is not the place to debate and posture about these and other issues unrelated to the County's business.

We Democrats running for the County Board will end that. We will focus on the real-life problems of Livingston County residents," said Caitlyn Perry Dial of Brighton, candidate for county commissioner in District 7, which includes the city of Brighton and most of Brighton Township. "Our common platform is our pledge that a County Commission run by Democrats will not spend its time on infighting over appointments and divisive social issues, but will do the County's real business," said Kasey Helton of Marion Township, candidate for county commissioner in District 5, which includes the city of Howell and all of Marion Township.

The common platform of the nine candidates includes expanding high-speed broadband to all parts of the county, tackling flooding along the Huron River in Hamburg Township, making sure millage funds raised for veterans' services are actually spent helping

veterans, hiring a new health director who will follow science, supporting local decision-making on environmental hazards such as gravel pits, making the County live up to its legal duty to maintain roads and bridges, and supporting better transportation services in the County,

At the top of the Democratic candidates' common program is the fight to secure affordable high-speed internet service for every Livingston County household and business. President Biden's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the bipartisan infrastructure bill that passed last November provide ample funding to do this, but only if the Commission makes smart decisions. Specifically, the program calls on the Commission to "ensure that ARPA, State, and County funding are made available only to projects that promise internet with verifiable minimum upload and download speeds of 400/400 Mbps." Lori Cowan, who is running in Commission district 3, which covers the southwestern part of the county, called the effort "a once-in-a-generation chance to make sure that all of our citizens reap the advantages of digital connection."

The platform also calls on commissioners to "widely publicize internet subsidy programs in which local providers are eligible to participate and require providers to provide such subsidies as a condition of public contracting." There is "no point in getting internet unless it's fast enough and doesn't cost an arm and a leg," said Lorrie McMahon of Genoa Township, candidate in District 6, which includes most of Genoa Township, the northwest corner of Brighton Township, and the southwest corner of Oceola Township

Just as citizens need to be connected to the internet, they also need be able to get around for doctors' visits, shopping, and visiting family, and more. "Seniors make up 24 percent of the county's population, and that is expected to increase another 39 percent by

2020. The need for a stronger transportation system is only going to grow,” said Lisa Wojciechowski of Deerfield Township, who is running in Commission district 2, which covers the townships of Deerfield, Tyrone, and the part of Oceola Township west of Latson Road. The LETS bus system needs to be expanded, with a hub in Brighton, and the Commission must keep in-county fares for seniors and people with disabilities at or below the current maximum of \$3 per ride and at or below \$6 per ride for others, the common program says.

The program also urges the Commission to take a science-based approach to public health. It demands that the commissioners “protect the prerogative of the Health Department to make decisions based on facts and science and insulate it from political pressures based on mis- and dis-information.” “Expertise needs to trump ideology if we’re going to keep our families healthy and safe,” said Dr. Amber Bismack of Hamburg Township, a science educator who is running in Commission district 8, which covers most of Hamburg and parts of Genoa Township.

Bismack noted that Democrats also would bring science to bear on addressing storm- and waste-water management, PFAS, and other water pollution threats -- problems that plague parts of the county, including in her district.

The Democratic candidates’ common program foresees no short-term need for additional revenues. Instead, it states that the County’s taxpayers deserve “the services our taxes [already] pay for.” Noting that citizens have been providing the Veterans Services department \$1.1 million each year through a millage, it calls for using the \$2.3 million that hasn’t been spent for new programs, or for the scale-up of existing ones, that are fully staffed to serve the needs of our veterans. Before the people vote on continuing the veterans’ service

millage, the Commission should spell out in detail how the extra funds will be spent so that the surplus doesn't continue to pile up. "If the surplus keeps growing, that would be a tax increase that produces no benefit for our vets," said Michelle Spisz of Fowlerville, who is running in Commission district 1, which covers the northwest part of the county. "Democrats want to make sure the veterans get the services they need and deserve -- and that the taxpayers are paying for."

The candidates' platform also calls for the veterans services committee to be "representative of the entire community, not just of one political party."

The document also calls on the Commission to return to exercising its responsibility under state law to maintain roads, bridges, and other vital safety and infrastructure services, and to stop punting the burden of these investments to cities and townships. "The County keeps touting its great AAA bond rating but says nothing about how it's not even maintaining existing roads and services," said Amelia Purdy-Ketchum of Oceola Township, who is running in Commission District 4, which includes the eastern half of Oceola Township and all of Hartland Township. "Right now, the Road Commission is sitting on \$10 million in unspent road funds that could be put to use so townships don't have to raise taxes," she noted.

Finally, the Democratic candidates pledged to fight attempts in the Legislature to take away the people's voice over the location of environmentally hazardous activities like gravel pits. It calls on the Commission to "vigorously oppose efforts by state lawmakers (as in Senate Bills 429, 430, and 431) to preempt city and township decision-making on gravel pit siting." And it states that local governments should also be able to restrict short-term rentals. "Republicans talk a good line about 'local control', but they still vote to preempt townships

from protecting their residents,” noted Chris Kaczkowski of Green Oak Township, who is running in District 9, which covers all of Green Oak Township and the southeast corner of Hamburg Township.

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