

Common Program of Democratic Candidates for Livingston County Commission in 2022

As a slate of Democrats running for the County Commission, we pledge our intention to return the Commission to seeking and implementing solutions to the real needs of all County residents. Addressing these needs requires:

1. **A Relentless Focus on Addressing *Real* Challenges.** Rather than sowing ‘Culture-War’ division on issues not even in its purview, the Commission must exercise its bipartisan responsibility to engage the county’s real problems, including public safety, storm- and waste-water management, PFAS and other water pollution threats, public health, senior and veterans’ services, running elections, preserving farmland, and investing in parks and recreation. Such a focus will result in bipartisan solutions that earn back the trust and support of the entire public.
2. **Affordable High-Speed Internet.** The pandemic made clear the need for such service, which has effectively made broadband a public utility. As such, it must be universally available, broadly affordable, and intelligently regulated. The Commission should 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. The commission must require that such service be available to every household and business, including those in areas that are considered “served” but which have slow or glitchy service, such as in the cities of Brighton and Howell. The County must 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.
3. **Reliable, Affordable Mobility Options.** In our rapidly aging county, reliable, affordable transit is essential for our seniors and others without cars. The Commission should support an expansion of the LETS system, including a new Brighton LETS facility, along with continued grant and budgetary support to keep in-county fares for seniors and people with physical disabilities at or below the current maximum of \$3 per ride and at or below \$6 per ride for others. The Transportation Coalition’s recommendations need to be engaged and acted upon rather than buried in committee.

4. **A Science-Based Approach to Public Health.** The Commission must 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. It must not use its oversight role to influence the Department director's decision-making on issues of health and disease prevention. The new director, and any new staff hired, must have strong academic qualifications and experience, and should not be illegally pressured to ignore CDC guidelines and recommendations.

5. **Enhanced Veterans Services.** We support continued funding for veterans once a detailed plan is produced for using the existing \$2.3 million surplus for new programs, or for the scale-up of existing ones, that are fully staffed to serve the needs of our veterans. The Commission should not approve a millage extension at a level that continues to add to the unspent surplus. Doing so is a tax increase that produces no benefit. The membership of the Veteran Affairs Committee should also be made representative of the entire community, not just of one political party.

6. **Maintaining Our Infrastructure.** The Commission must return to exercising its statutory responsibility under state law to maintain roads, bridges, and other vital safety and infrastructure services. Much of the money with which to do so is already in hand or soon will be. We deserve the services our taxes pay for. The County needs to stop dumping responsibility for roads on local cities and townships. Touting the credit-worthiness of a AAA bond rating makes a nice sound-bite, but the Commission should stop using it as an excuse for inaction.

7. **The Right of Cities & Townships to Exclude Projects & Businesses That Threaten Their Air & Water Quality.** The Commission should support the authority of local units of government to exclude activities -- such as asphalt plants and gravel pits -- that burden their citizens with industrial pollution that threatens air and water quality. The commission must 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 transfer it to the State, preventing local voices from being heard in the process and invariably favoring corporate over community interests. Local governments should also be able to restrict short-term rentals that affect neighborhood livability.