

2020 County Board Election Questions

On behalf of the McLean County Chamber of Commerce Political Action Committee (PAC) thank you for your interest in elected leadership serving constituents in the communities of McLean County.

Please find our candidate survey attached to this email for the November 3, 2020 general election. Answers must be complete and submitted no later than Friday, July 10, 2020 by 4:00 PM to be eligible for candidate interviews slated for late July and early August. Responses from the survey and interview will be considered by the full PAC Board when endorsing candidates and/or providing a financial contribution.

We look forward to getting to know you as a candidate. If you have any questions about the PAC or our endorsement process for this general election, please call Charlie Moore at 309-829-6344.

Best regards,

Meghan O'Neal-Rogozinski
Chairman

Candidate Name

Catherine Metsker

County Board District

McLean County Board District #1

1. What are your top three priorities if you are elected to the McLean County Board?

I believe the top three priorities for the McLean County Board currently and moving forward are:

1. Financial Position – McLean County has a long history of fiscal responsibility being very accountable with the taxes paid by our citizens. McLean County continues to focus on keeping the tax rate flat while maintaining services and expanding some services to meet critical needs.
2. Behavioral Health Initiative – McLean County has and continues to lead the collaborative initiative dealing with issues of mental health in our county including care and treatment for residents with mental health substance abuse, and development disabilities. These successful efforts must continue and our community's support of funding through a combined sales tax is critical.
3. County Nursing Home – The McLean County Nursing Home provides quality long term and rehabilitative care for county residents. For several years McLean County has been working to provide high-quality long-term care serving all people especially those who use Medicaid. The McLean County Board should continue to utilize the community based Blue Ribbon Panel to focus on viability of the county nursing home.

2. What is the greatest challenge(s) the County faces? How do you propose to address said challenge(s)?

I have always been concerned at the lack of development in our rural communities. Smart growth and development will benefit the entire county. It is important for the county to encourage and support responsible development and growth in the rural parts of Mclean County. However, growth must take place without negatively impacting uninvolvement (non-participating) property owners. Property owners have the right to develop their properties as they want within zoning parameters. Those parameters must include protection of neighboring properties. This balance is essential to rural development.

Another recent challenge is the economic impact of COVID on our entire county. Our rural communities are especially hard hit because a high percentage of their revenue comes from sales tax. With sales tax income reduced, our rural communities will struggle. Although McLean County does not have financial assistance programs, we can help locate state and federal assistance and provide help navigating the processes. We are currently unable to determine the total economic magnitude of COVID, but I believe our rural communities will be hit harder than our urban neighbors – Bloomington and Normal. The county must manage the economic impact of COVID without reducing current services.

3. If elected to the County Board, how would you work with the municipalities to enhance and ensure regional collaboration?

The district I represent is made up on many small communities and villages. I make an effort to regularly communicate with the community leaders and mayors. I subscribe to every local weekly newspaper to stay informed of events, meetings, and issues being addressed in each village. I know my relationship with these individuals is essential to providing needed support and understanding of their challenges. I will continue to build needed relationships moving forward.

4. How do you plan to make yourself available to not only your immediate constituents but to business, civic, and non-profit organizations, and rural community leaders?

McLean County District # 1 includes a number of unincorporated small towns, villages, and a significant number of rural townships. I diligently reach out to and meet with the community leaders, mayors, and township officials regularly. I also make a special effort to keep the citizens aware of zoning and road issues from the county. These efforts will not change moving forward. Because I subscribe to all the weekly newspapers, I am well informed of community, school, village, and township meetings, events, and issues within each community / village. Being active within my District will continue.

5. Do you consider McLean County to be encouraging of business growth, expansion, and attraction? Please explain.

McLean County encourages business growth, expansion, and attraction through the Economic Development Council (EDC). McLean County is a financial partner of the EDC. The EDC is the point of contact for these important activities. The McLean County Board requires the EDC director to provide quarterly status / summary reports to us. This helps ensure the county tax payer contribution is utilized in the interest of county citizens. I have personally met with and continue to have conversation with the new EDC director. I remind him McLean County is more than just Bloomington and Normal. He seems to be responsive as he and his staff reached out to the village mayors to help them navigate federal and state COVID financial program applications. In addition, at the Finance Committee's direction (for which I am Vice Chair), the EDC director also spearheaded the revision of the a county loan program establishing two Small Business Recovery Loan Programs to provide needed small business COVID relief using a simplified the application process.

6. What role does County government have in economic development?

Since the EDC is the principal organization within the county to work with businesses for new or expanding opportunities, McLean County should continue to leverage these experts. EDC staff members have years of expertise and relationships essential to assist McLean County businesses grow and attract new businesses. Their leadership markets McLean County communities through marketing our communities' assets. McLean County's role in economic development is to continue holding the EDC accountable to county-wide results. Also, McLean County is responsible to monitor economic development so as to protect the interest of all - not just those who profit. As a board member I believe I have a responsibility to ensure our citizens are not taken advantage of but, benefit from economic development.

7. How would you advocate the County overcome difficulties presented by the unstable financial situation in the State of Illinois?

As a McLean County Board member, I have little influence in overcoming the financial situation created by the State of Illinois legislation and agencies. However, I will work to see county services are not adversely impacted should state funding be reduced.

8. Are there any government services you feel are missing from the County? Alternatively, are there any that you view as non-essential and could be eliminated?

McLean County provides broad and comprehensive services to our citizens at a reasonably low cost. I am not aware of any services McLean County is lacking. I can however, identify critical indispensable areas – Public Safety and Court Service. My experience with the Sheriff's Office, Jail, Juvenile Detention, MetCom, and Court Services would indicate these areas are lean and well administered county departments. A unique gem in our county is Comlara Park and Evergreen Lake. The Parks and Recreation Department manages and provides high-quality outdoor recreational activities for all citizens of McLean County. This treasure is a rarity in Illinois counties.

I am not aware of any non-essential or redundant services being provided by McLean County.

9. Do local government(s) have a role to play in COVID-19 recovery efforts?

The McLean County Public Health Department has and will continue to play a significant role in COVID recovery from a wellness perspective. The Small Business Recovery Loan Programs and the County's support of the Downstate Small Business Stabilization Program are examples of the county's efforts to assist businesses in need. Finally, the equitable distribution of federal funds is critical and may become the responsibility of the county.

The McLean County Chamber of Commerce works with the Political Action Committee to help its membership understand who you are as a candidate and what your policies will be if elected. We achieve this by sharing your responses with the membership to help increase the turnout of educated voters. I agree that the McLean County Chamber of Commerce may share and publish my responses as submitted and as presented, on the McLean County Chamber of Commerce website www.mcleancochamber.org.

☒ Yes

☐ No

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms