



2022 Carroll County Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE : Sean Shaffer

OFFICE SOUGHT : County Commissioner District Four

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I confirm that the responses provided here are my official positions in seeking local office and I understand that CCEA intends to share my responses with members and interested parties.

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: _____ **Sean Shaffer** _____

DATE SUBMITTED: 2/10/2022

Candidates: To be considered for a recommendation, you must indicate your response to each of the questions. Clarifications, explanations, and other information may be attached, but please be certain to clearly indicate the question(s) to which you refer.

Please return your completed and signed questionnaire at your earliest convenience to Nathan Curtis at ncurtis@mseanea.org or to our office at 60 Aileron Court, Suite 6, Westminster, MD 21157.

Education Funding

Background Points

- Backgrounds of questions removed for brevity's sake.

1. Please provide your general and specific thoughts on how the county can address the unmet needs facing our schools. Detail how you would prioritize aid for education in your budget deliberations.

My concerns will be the needs of programs and if those needs are met. Any formulas or algorithms would just be a guideline. Such tools do not look at the programs themselves. The needs of students and staff cannot be determined by math. The school board needs to be clear on their budgetary requirements with a coherent plan that they will adhere to; this way we can clearly see what needs to be funding and make sure that funding is in place.

In the past the school board has not a good track record in regard to technology and implementing such technology. There are times when the answer must be no.

2. There is considerable room for improvement in addressing educator recruitment and retention. Class sizes have increased because of cost-cutting measures and/or due to hiring freezes and retirements. Many support personnel positions have been eliminated. And Maryland is always challenged with filling educator jobs because we import nearly half of all certificated teachers from prep programs in other states. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated these shortages. At the same time, the Blueprint calls for the hiring of 15,000 additional educators to provide more individualized attention to students. How will you address critical concerns with educator recruitment and retention?

I would rather Carroll County developed their own prep programs. I'd like to see a program similar to medical residency where teaching students would get workplace training and retain them after graduation for staffing positions.

3. Do you support or oppose Maryland's updated maintenance of effort law that requires local jurisdictions to fund the local share of all wealth-equalized formulas, instead of only the foundation formula?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

I do not care for specific formulas. A mathematical algorithm will not address needs of programs and students or staff. Such formulas would be a guideline at best and I would rather look at the needs of schools and students to determine actual funding.

Public Funding for Private Schools

4. Do you support or oppose allocating public funding to home and privately schooled students?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

Individuals who take the responsibility to teach their own children also assumes the risks of costs. Same goes for private groups who run their own schools. Public funding should not be used for private use.

However the major problem with home schooling is the lack of materials or materials of a non-religious nature. Many people who home school do so not for religious reasons.

I would like to see the Public Schools release their lesson plans and materials in an open format for use by other parties. Similar to openstax (Rice University) or OCW (open course work) of MIT.

In this way those who chose to home school will have the tools required without purchasing inappropriate materials for their needs and private schools will have the same access to materials but have their own staff and budget requirements.

Anyone who wants their own specific content taught will have to do so with their own funding as that is the risk of not using the Public School system.

Collective Bargaining

5. Do you support or oppose public education employees' rights to bargain collectively?

Support

Oppose

6. Would you commit, as a Commissioner, to funding collective bargaining agreements that were negotiated and ratified by the Carroll County Board of Education and its employees?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

I want to address both questions in this comment by making sure it is understood that while I support collective bargaining for all employees, I Do Not support the effort to take money from non-union members as an agency fee or similar.

It is an individual choice to join any union or other representation. While all teachers or staff will benefit from the bargaining only union members will be required to pay any fees.

Continuing Impact of the Pandemic

7. How will your budget address increased needs for mental health supports for students and educators in the wake of the pandemic?

8. Safe and affordable housing is necessary for all students to be able to succeed in school. What is your position on affordable housing and how it relates to education?

The United States does not have any functional mental health capacity. This is a larger issue that must be address in a more appropriate forum. I am not attempting to dismiss the question but rather we need to get more involvement in other agencies or departments to address these matters.

Much in the same regarding as the housing question. This is not a matter of education needs but an overall problem that has more importance than as an education/social issue. We do need to address these issues and I would like to do so in a larger capacity than in a campaign questionnaire.

9. The pandemic further illuminated the immediate need for reliable, affordable access to technology for all students and educators in our state. How would you propose to eliminate the digital divide?

This is not solely a pandemic/education issue. The pandemic has laid bare a number of issues that were present and not addressed.

The long standing policy of network providers (specifically cell phone providers) to limit bandwidth was shown to be false when they opened their networks during the pandemic to no ill effect; something they have crying would happen for years. I would have cell providers maintain an open and neutral network.

We need a net neutral policy to protect access and speech. The County would need to do more to provide networks for providers to sell service on. Ting's efforts were a good idea but limit access to Westminster only and not at lower prices is a failure.

I'd rather the County establish a county wide fiber network that any provider can sell service on for a fee to maintain the network. It would be net neutral and a utility (commons) not a private network like comcast's cable services.

Devices need to be addressed as well. We cannot require specific devices because a specific service is needed. This is both on the grounds of equality but also security. The vulnerability of services like Zoom and hardware like Windows/Apple Tablets have become more widely known. Risks and vulnerabilities that experts and technical skilled personal have known about for some time.

Racial and Social Justice

10. Do you support honesty in education? Do you believe educators have professional autonomy and should be afforded the deference to teach the truth in their classrooms, schools & districts?

For example, if a Carroll County high school history teacher, keeping with the approved CCPS curriculum, taught the true local story of Townsend Cook, who was lynched in Westminster in 1885, and as a result some parents became upset because they saw the lesson's material as divisive and controversial, would you as a County Commissioner, defend/support that teacher's right to teach students this true story as part of the curriculum?

Support Third Option

Oppose

Additional Comments:

This is not an issue of honesty as you originally portrayed. This is conflating Truth with Opinion which never should be done. You are asking if an opinion of a controversial topic should be taught as Truth. The answer to that question is no; opinion is never truth.

I don't believe that history should be ignored or not taught but we do need to address if a subject is actually important to be taught. In your example; Who was Townsend Cook and does either his life or death matter in the overall historical fabric of Carroll County? Was he (an assumption I'll admit) the Only black individual (again an assumption I'll admit) lynched in Carroll County?

Why do we only need to discuss matters in a black vs. white scale? What of any violence done to Asians, Native Americans or Hispanics; and why must only violence be the controversy? I do not agree to only maintain this Black/White paradigm and not discuss any other culture or ethnic group.

Do you know the actual definition of 'Social Justice'. The mob that lynches a man is also practicing 'Social Justice'. Is Social Justice defined as 'justice in society' or the 'justice of society'. This is an important distinction before you get bogged down in controversy of what should or should not be taught.

'Social Justice' is 'Mob Rule'; do you really want that? This is another matter like questions 7 & 8 that need to be addressed in a larger forum.

11. How will you support diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students throughout the county? What specific policies do you support whose goals are focused on providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and supports?

My policy in such regards is simple. Given qualified for a position no: applicant, employee or student shall be rejected / discriminated on grounds of race, creed, color, gender, sexual preference, ethnic background, culture or any other discerning label that may exist in the future; providing that the employee/student does not attempt to extort another (as in force such bias) on the same grounds.

To be blunt I do not give a damn about a persons' origins or aspects, provided they grant me the same opportunities they are being given. If we hold everyone to this same basic foundation and then build on that giving everyone the same opportunities; that is the only policy I'll support.

Community Schools

12. Do you support or oppose local efforts to create and support community schools in areas of concentrated poverty?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

Not because I oppose the ideals but rather believe that schools are not the appropriate place. If such services are needed then I ask the question why are not the community centers providing them.

Do we not have 'community' centers ? What are they providing that we need to specifically provide such services in a school setting ? I would rather have schools focused on academics and education, providing training and trade skills for job entry. Community services should be the focus of community centers not schools.

There is greater need for basic services now more than ever and the typical American response of letting private business or corporations provides those services for a cost is no longer an acceptable practice.

Parental Involvement and Public Support

13. What would you do to increase parental involvement and public support for our public schools and educators?

14. How do you plan to work with Carroll County educators if elected to the Board of Commissioners?

Your entire premise is based on parents interaction with schools but you want to know what I will do to facilitate this.

Nothing, I will do nothing to facilitate this. Parents need to discuss matters with schools; admins and teachers need to be receptive of this interaction. It is not my responsibility to play referee between schools and parents.

When I was in tech school, YTI describe the students as customers; we paid for our education and they wanted to hear from us wether we thought we were getting our money's worth.

You need to have the same attitude with parents and students. Your list of factors even indicate that parents expect this relationship with their children's school but you want the commissioners to facilitate this. Clearly you have the wrong attitude with regards to parents and students.

Privatization

15. Are you in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance services rather than have those services provided by Board of Education employees?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

I do not support privatization of any public service or agency.

Essay Questions

- A. What are the top three things you would like to accomplish in the next four years if you are elected to the Carroll County Board of Commissioners?

Develop infrastructure, current status is clearly insufficient. Not only does existing services and capability needs updating or repair but we need to bring in more capabilities in line with the 21st century and allow public access to such capabilities to level the playing field with corporations.

Develop education, I'd like to see Associate's degrees offered to high school graduate as it has become the new minimum entry standard for hiring and employment. In the electronics trade my Westminster High education would have been 80% of my AST degree. With a little development we could make our high school curriculum viable for degrees.

There also needs some issues addressed with Quality of Life and Civil Rights. We play games with ID laws for voting and turning driver's licenses into ad-hoc citizenship papers. Then require these poorly maintained systems to access public services. This needs to be reevaluated.

- B. What is your view of the current local tax structure? What, if any, changes would you advocate for?

A higher minimum wage, this will boost tax revenues without actually increasing taxes. Also stop giving tax breaks to lure corporations into Carroll County who do not hire locally.

Also would like to see more in the way of support and services to allow more local development of business to increase corporate tax base and create more local jobs.