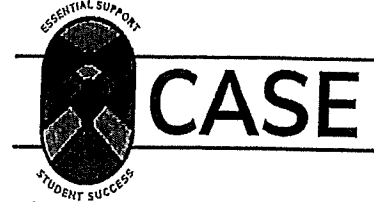




2026

Carroll County Commissioner
Candidate Questionnaire



NAME of CANDIDATE : Tom Gordon

OFFICE SOUGHT : Carroll County Commissioner

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I confirm that the responses provided here are my official positions in seeking local office and I understand that CCEA and CASE intend to share my responses with members and interested parties through our public website.

SIGNATURE: [Signature] DATE SUBMITTED: 3/3/26

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 clearly indicate the question(s) to which you refer.

Please return your completed and signed questionnaire no later than February 24, 2026 to Nathan Curtis at ncurtis@mseane.org or to our office at 60 Aileron Court, Suite 6, Westminster, MD 21157.

Getting to Know You

1. Please share a brief bio for us to know you better. Be sure to include how long you've lived in Carroll County, whether you have/had children or other family members in Carroll County Public Schools (CCPS), and other ways in which you are involved in our community.

I am a lifelong resident of Carroll County, Maryland, proudly serving the community that shaped me. Having lived here my entire life, I am a product of Carroll County Public Schools and credit my teachers for providing me with an excellent education that laid the foundation for my personal and professional success. That experience instilled in me a deep respect for educators and a strong commitment to supporting the next generation of Carroll County students.

As County Commissioner, I focus on fiscal responsibility, public safety, educational support, and strengthening the county's economic foundation. I believe in maintaining a balanced and sustainable tax structure that protects homeowners while working to grow Carroll County's commercial and industrial tax base to reduce reliance on residential taxes and create long term financial stability.

I am actively involved in the community beyond my role in county government. I attend local school events, civic meetings, nonprofit fundraisers, agricultural fairs, veterans' gatherings, and small business openings. I support youth programs, agricultural initiatives, and community service organizations that make Carroll County a special place to live and raise a family. I value open dialogue with residents and makes accessibility a priority, frequently I engage with constituents at public events and through community forums.

My roots in Carroll County's history and traditions make me committed to preserving its rural character while responsibly planning for the future. My lifelong connection to the county fuels my dedication to ensuring it remains a place of opportunity, strong schools, safe neighborhoods, and economic vitality for generations to come.

2. 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?

Completion of the Robert Moton Museum which I will see completed and I have lead this initiative for them with the county.

I will work with the Board of Education and the teacher's union to ensure that funding priorities reflect the real needs in classrooms. This includes advocating for sufficient instructional resources, addressing budget shortfalls, while striving to meet state education standards responsibly. I commit to working with the teacher's union and Board of Education to explore sustainable ways to enhance teacher compensation and benefits. A competitive compensation plan is essential for attracting and retaining excellent educators who will serve our students for years to come.

I want to establish structured dialogue between county leadership, school administrators, and the teacher's union. To ensure your voice helps shape budget priorities, facility planning, safety initiatives, and policy decisions that directly affect teaching and learning.

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

Carroll County's revenue system relies heavily on property taxes and local income taxes paid primarily by our residents. That structure has provided stability, but it also means that when we face budget pressures whether from state mandates, rising costs, or economic slowdowns the burden often falls back on homeowners and working families. That is not a sustainable long-term strategy if we want to both protect taxpayers and properly support our schools.

My view is that we must maintain fiscal discipline and avoid overburdening residents with sudden tax increases. At the same time, we cannot ignore the need to adequately fund education, retain strong teachers, and provide predictable resources for our classrooms.

The solution is not simply raising rates. The solution is strengthening and diversifying our tax base, particularly by expanding our commercial and industrial sector.

A stronger industrial and commercial tax base benefits everyone. When we attract manufacturers, technology firms, logistics companies, and other high-quality employers, they contribute significantly to the tax base without adding the same level of service demands as residential growth. That helps reduce the pressure on homeowners and creates more stable revenue to support priorities like education. For the teachers' union, this matters because a broader commercial and industrial base creates more reliable funding for schools without constant tension over residential tax increases. It gives us the ability to better plan, better invest, and better retain the educators our students depend on. We must protect homeowners, grow our industrial and commercial base, diversify revenue streams, and create a more stable long term foundation for education funding in Carroll County. That is how we responsibly support both our taxpayers and our teachers.

Education Funding

4. Please provide your thoughts on how the county should address the consistent budget shortfall of the Carroll County Public School system. Detail how you would prioritize funding for public education in your budget deliberations.

I understand the frustration that comes with repeated budget shortfalls and the uncertainty it creates for educators, staff, and families.

Public education is a core responsibility of county government. When I approach budget deliberations, the classroom comes first. Stability for educators must be a priority if we expect stability for students.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that the recurring shortfall is structural. Carroll County relies heavily on residential property taxes and local income taxes. As costs continue to rise whether through Blueprint mandates, transportation, healthcare, or inflation the gap widens unless we address the underlying revenue structure.

Simply raising taxes on homeowners every time there is a shortfall is not a responsible long-term solution. Instead, we need to diversify and strengthen our tax base. I strongly believe that expanding our commercial and industrial base is key. A stronger industrial and business presence generates revenue that helps fund schools without placing additional strain on residential taxpayers. That creates more predictable and sustainable funding for education.

In my budget deliberations, my priorities will be:

- Protect core classroom funding first.

- Avoid using one-time dollars to cover recurring expenses.
- Demand transparency and multi-year planning so we are not operating in crisis mode each year.
- Support economic development policies that strengthen long-term revenue stability for schools.

You deserve predictability. Our students deserve stability. And taxpayers deserve fiscal responsibility. My commitment is to balance those responsibilities in a way that strengthens education not just for this year, but for the long term.

I look forward to continuing an open dialogue with you as we work toward sustainable solutions together.

5. What specific ideas or strategies would you pursue to increase revenue or identify new funding sources for Carroll County Public Schools? How would you ensure that any additional resources directly support students, educators, and the overall quality of education in the district?

To ensure sustainable funding for Carroll County Public Schools, we must grow our commercial and industrial tax base, attract high-wage jobs, responsibly manage growth, and build fiscal reserves that prevent annual shortfalls. At the same time, we must commit that new revenue is directed first to classrooms, teacher retention, student support services, and measurable academic outcomes. Sustainable education funding requires both economic growth and disciplined accountability. A 12-month action plan which needs to be implemented.

6. 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

Comments/Explanation:

Support , I support the intent of Maryland’s updated maintenance of effort law because it promotes stable and equitable funding for all students, especially those with greater needs. At the same time, it is essential that the state provide adequate funding, reasonable phase in periods, and flexibility for local jurisdictions. Carroll County must be able to meet these requirements without compromising other essential services, and I will work to ensure that any new obligations are implemented responsibly and sustainably.

Public Funding for Private Schools

7. What is your position on providing public funding for students who are homeschooled or attend private schools?

Support Oppose

Comments/Explanation:

I believe that public education funding should first and foremost support students enrolled in our public schools, ensuring that classrooms, teachers, and programs are fully resourced. Public funds are designed to provide a high quality education to all students who rely on Carroll County Public Schools.

At the same time, I recognize that parents have the right to choose alternative educational options, including homeschooling or private schools. While I respect those choices, I do not support diverting public funds away from public schools to pay for private or homeschool instruction. Funding should prioritize students, educators, and the quality of education in our public system, which serves the vast majority of children in the county.

Collective Bargaining

8. What is your position on the right of public education employees to engage in collective bargaining?

Support Oppose

Comments/Explanation:

I strongly believe that public education employees deserve to have their voices heard and represented in matters that affect their working conditions, compensation, and professional environment. Collective bargaining is a legitimate tool for ensuring that teachers, support staff, and other school employees have a seat at the table when decisions are made that impact their classrooms and livelihoods.

At the same time, as an elected official responsible for the county budget and taxpayers, I also have a duty to ensure that agreements reached through collective bargaining are fiscally responsible, transparent, and aligned with the county's overall priorities for public education.

I support the right of public education employees to engage in collective bargaining, and I am committed to working collaboratively with unions to reach solutions that are fair to employees, sustainable for the county, and focused on improving educational outcomes for students.

9. 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 bargaining units?

Support Oppose

Comments/Explanation:

I am committed to funding collective bargaining agreements that are negotiated and ratified by the Board of Education and its recognized bargaining units. At the same time, we must ensure these agreements are implemented responsibly and sustainably.

Community Supports

10. Safe and affordable housing is necessary for all students to be able to succeed in school. In addition, many of our public service employees are currently unable to afford housing in Carroll County. What is your position on affordable housing and how it relates to education?

I believe affordable housing is directly tied to student success. We need diversity in our housing. When families have safe, stable, and reasonably priced homes, children attend school consistently, focus on learning, and thrive in the classroom. Carroll County should support housing policies that provide options for families, align growth with school capacity, and help students reach their full potential.

Racial and Social Justice

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

I fully support honesty and integrity in education. Students deserve accurate, fact based instruction, and educators should have the professional ability to teach the truth within the curriculum and standards approved by the state and local school system.

I believe teachers are trained professionals who understand how to present sensitive or complex topics appropriately for their students. Affording them the deference and trust to do their jobs ensures that students receive meaningful, credible education while maintaining the quality and integrity of our schools.

An example of approved Carroll County curriculum is the true story of Townsend Cook, who was lynched in Westminster in 1885. Some parents have expressed concern over the lesson, viewing the material as divisive and controversial.

12. Would you, as a County Commissioner, defend and support that teacher's right to teach students this true story as part of the approved Carroll County curriculum?

Support

Oppose

Comments/Explanation:

Yes, I firmly support teachers' rights to present accurate factual history in the classroom, including difficult but important stories like that of Townsend Cook, who was lynched in Westminster in 1885. Students deserve to learn the full history of our county, even when it is difficult, because understanding the past is essential to building a more informed and compassionate community.

I personally supported the addition of a historical marker on county property to recognize this event, and I am proud that it will be dedicated this June. Recognizing this history publicly and supporting educators in teaching it are both critical steps toward truth, remembrance, and education for all Carroll County students.

13. How will you support and promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion for all students throughout the county? What specific policies or initiatives do you support that provide equitable access, opportunities, resources, and support for every student?

I am committed to supporting and promoting justice, equity, and diversity for all students throughout Carroll County. Every student, regardless of their background, should have access to high-quality education, inclusive curricula, and safe learning environments that honor their identity and history.

I support policies and initiatives that advance these goals, including: educational opportunities for historically underrepresented students. Supporting inclusive curriculum development that tells the full history of our communities. Promoting cultural and historical awareness through programs and partnerships.

For example, long before I became commissioner, I worked to ensure that Ellsworth Cemetery was annexed into the City of Westminster, preserving its historical and cultural significance. More recently, I led the charge to establish the Robert Moton Museum, celebrating the history and contributions of African American students and educators. These efforts reflect my ongoing commitment to acknowledging our past, honoring diverse voices, and providing educational opportunities for all students.

Parental Involvement and Public Support

14. What would you do to strengthen public support for our public schools and educators?

I am committed to supporting Carroll County's public schools and educators by prioritizing classroom funding, protecting teacher salaries and benefits, and ensuring student support services are fully resourced. I work closely with the Board of Education and teachers' union to understand needs, advocate for stable funding through economic growth, and support initiatives like the Robert Moton Museum and the preservation of Ellsworth Cemetery that enrich our students' learning and honor our educators' legacy.

In the spring of 2025, CCEA collaborated with CCPS, the County Commissioners, and the Carroll County Delegation to advocate for a waiver from the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB). This is a concrete example of bipartisan efforts to do what is best for Carroll County students.

15. If elected to the Board of Commissioners, how would you collaborate with the Carroll County Educators Association (CCEA), the Carroll Association of School Employees (CASE), and the Association of Public School Administrators and Supervisors of Carroll County (APSASCCO) if elected to the Board of Commissioners?

.If reelected, I will work closely and collaboratively with the educators' unions to ensure that the voices of teachers and staff are heard in decisions that impact students and classrooms. I will continue meetings with union leadership to discuss budget priorities, staffing, student programs. My goal is to continue to foster a partnership built on trust, transparency, and shared responsibility, so that together we can create policies and initiatives that directly benefit educators and improve student outcomes across Carroll County.

Privatization

16. Are you in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria, Speech and Language Pathologists, and maintenance services rather than having those services provided by Board of Education employees?

_____ Support

X Oppose

Comments/Explanation:

I oppose privatizing these types of services. Changing can offer less accountability with higher turnover and affect job security.

I will continue to do what I've done in past years to have the trust of CCEA, which is why the organization backed me in the last election. I will defer to the recommendation of CCEA, CASE, and CCPS to present their most desired and financially effective way to proceed with respect to their custodial employees. Therefore, all of the budgetary and operational details regarding the choice are considered before discussions with the Board of Commissioners. That way my support decision is based on fact and what the aforementioned organizations know will work best for CCPS students, staff, and administration during these challenging budgetary times.

Thank you for taking the time to address the questions above.