



Candidate Questionnaire for DeKalb Board of Commissioners (BOC) Races

Summary of Responses

April 17, 2024

Who We Are - DeKalb Citizens Advocacy Council (DCAC) is a group of community members from all parts of DeKalb County. Our goal is to educate the citizens of DeKalb County about county governance issues and to advocate for informed citizen engagement and government transparency. We are operating as a 501(c)(4) organization and do not endorse candidates.

Project / Purpose – DCAC conducted a voter education project for election to fill these BOC seats. We used the following questionnaire to gather information from all qualified candidates. Candidate responses are provided here verbatim and will be made available to the public online and to the media prior to election day.

Methodology – DCAC emailed the questionnaire to the email addresses the candidates posted on their qualifying paperwork to the Secretary of State’s office. After multiple attempts by email, we were unable to get a response from two candidates.

Those Who Responded

Robert Patrick – District 1
Andy Yeoman – District 1
Lance Hammonds – District 4
Chakira Johnson – District 4
Gabrielle Rogers – District 4
Gina Smith Mangham – District 5
Ted Terry – District 6

Those Who Did Not Respond

Rita Scott – District 4
Mereda Davis Johnson – District 5

Note: The election for the District 2 seat does not occur this year. District 3 and 7 candidates will be surveyed later this summer/fall prior to the primary election for these two vacated seats.

1. How involved have you been with DeKalb County government or community issues? What expertise and experience in working to address community issues do you bring to the BOC?

DISTRICT 1

Robert Patrick – District 1

I was a municipal employee with the City of Norcross in the planning department for 14 years. I was also a Doraville councilman for 8 years. As a DeKalb County Commissioner for the past 3 years, I am the first District 1 Commissioner to have the honor to serve as the Presiding Officer of the Board of Commissioners. Currently, I am serving as our Deputy Presiding Officer. I became interested in running for DeKalb County as I was concerned that any improvements to city services also needed accompanying improvements in county services in order for our communities to grow.

As the current District 1 County Commissioner, I have been very active within the county on a variety of issues. I have engaged on everything from the county budget, to storm water concerns, pothole repairs, road repaving, utility billing assistance, zoning text amendments to increased housing options for current and future residents. I helped support the current version of SPLOST/EHOST within the Board of Commissioners.

Andy Yeoman – District 1

I have extensive involvement with DeKalb County government and community issues through several significant roles:

Doraville City Council Member: I served on the Doraville City Council, where I participated in the governance of the city, contributing to local legislation, policy-making, and community engagement. This position gave me invaluable insight into municipal governance and the intricacies of local government operations.

Past President of Homeowners Association: I led the homeowners association, focusing on addressing community needs, resolving disputes, and managing budgets and projects, which honed my leadership and negotiation skills.

Past Chair of the Doraville Planning Commission: This role involved detailed urban planning and development discussions, enabling me to contribute significantly to the city's growth and zoning regulations.

Former Director of the Doraville Development Authority: I was pivotal in the redevelopment of the former General Motors Assembly Plant, involving extensive planning, stakeholder negotiations, and project management.

Negotiated Amendments to the 2023 Tax Allocation District for the General Motors Site: I collaborated closely with DeKalb County to amend the TAD to match the needs of the new owners, showcasing my ability to negotiate and work within governmental frameworks.

My expertise and experience include:

Local Government and Policy-Making: As a former Doraville City Council Member, I have direct experience in local governance, policy-making, and community engagement, crucial for understanding and navigating county issues effectively.

Community Leadership and Mediation: Through leading a homeowners association and serving on the city council, I have developed strong leadership and conflict-resolution skills, essential for addressing residents' concerns and fostering community harmony.

Urban Planning and Economic Development: My roles with the Doraville Planning Commission and Development Authority provided me with a comprehensive background in urban planning, development, and economic initiatives, key areas of focus for the county commission.

Fiscal Negotiation and Strategic Planning: My experience negotiating the Tax Allocation District amendments and overseeing large-scale redevelopment projects has equipped me with the skills to manage fiscal policies and strategic planning, vital for the county's economic health and community development.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Engagement: My various leadership roles have required collaboration with multiple stakeholders, including residents, business owners, and government officials, enabling me to build consensus and engage effectively with diverse community sectors.

DISTRICT 4

Lance Hammonds – District 4

I have been working on projects, serving on commissions and committees, leading non-profit organizations, and leading neighborhood change efforts in this county for over thirty years. I have led my own neighborhood association. I have served on boards dedicated to working with the youth of the County. I have been a commission appointed member of boards focused on Safety, Transit, Education, County Parks, and just recently completed work as a member of the Charter Review Commission. In short, I've had my hand in every facet of County work and business.

Chakira Johnson – District 4

I served on Stone Mountain City Council for 16 years and have been actively involved in my community. In addition to serving on the City Council, I was on the Downtown Development Authority Board for about 12 years. I also serve on the ART Station Board, Stone Mountain Community Garden Board, and the Stone Mountain Historic Society Board. I have a passion for giving back and being involved in my community.

Gabrielle Rogers – District 4

As a dedicated member of the DeKalb County community, I will bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the Board of Commissioners. My involvement with various organizations such as the DeKalb Young Democrats and the National Coalition of 100 Black Women Decatur-DeKalb Chapter, Inc. demonstrates my commitment to addressing community issues head-on. From exposing malfeasance to spearheading initiatives like registering returning citizens to vote, my leadership has consistently prioritized the well-being of our residents. Additionally, my advocacy work with organizations like DeKalb NCNW Section, the Stone Mountain Action Coalition and the DeKalb County Sheriff's Office Community Commission on Policy Review underscores my dedication to the community, public safety, education, and social justice. My tenure as the youngest board member of the DeKalb Chamber further solidified my ability to represent the interests of young professionals and minority-owned businesses highlights my work in business and economic development. I am eager to bring this passion and experience to the Board of Commissioners to continue serving the people of DeKalb County diligently.

DISTRICT 5

Gina Smith Mangham – District 5

I have been actively involved in community issues, working with residents and DeKalb County government for more than 20 years. Engaging other residents in my neighborhood, I have mediated countless zoning issues, and worked on improvements to the zoning code, some of which were accepted. As a result, I founded and organized the East DeKalb Community Coalition (EDCC). We have circulated numerous petitions on many issues. In collaboration with other community leaders, organizations, and colleagues, we have successfully prevented

environmentally harmful development in our community, including a biomass plant, a composting facility, and an asphalt factory. I led and succeeded in the effort to fill the temporarily vacated District 5 seat on the Board of Commissioners (BOC) when Lee May was appointed interim CEO. On a broader county scale, I drafted and submitted a proposal for increasing police pay by 20%, with a recommendation on how to fund it. Together with other advocates, I led an effort to bring transportation to South/East DeKalb, soliciting support from residents, churches, organizations and others in all affected jurisdictions. We received support from more than 10,000 citizens by petition, letters from community organizations, as well as official resolutions passed by each jurisdiction and the DeKalb Delegation of the House of Representatives. We met with executives from MARTA, VHB (technical consultants) and other experts for weeks. As a result of our work, we produced a "white paper" study, with recommendations and financial analyses, which was officially submitted to the BOC in June 2018. (Unfortunately, we received no feedback or action.) I have come before the BOC on countless issues for comments and hearings, attended BOC Committee meetings, Community Council, Planning Commission, Stonecrest City Council meetings, town halls, and focus groups. I have met and/or worked with virtually every community organization in southeast and central DeKalb. I previously served on the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Citizens SPLOST Oversight Group (mandated by the initial SPLOST legislation) where, with input from other members, I drafted a proposed template for annual reporting, which was adopted by the Group. These are just a few examples of my work and commitment to the protect and improve the quality of life for the citizens of the 5th District and the county overall.

DISTRICT 6

Ted Terry – District 6

I am in my 4th year on the BOC, combined with my term as Clarkston Mayor, I've dedicated over a decade of public service in DeKalb County. I am fully committed to working on all of the issues that our county faces over the next 8-12 years.

2. What is your experience in managing an organization's finances, and what is the largest budget for which you have been responsible?

DISTRICT 1

Robert Patrick – District 1

During my service as an elected official, I have reviewed and approved budgets annually. This also includes reviewing the annual audit. The largest budget to date is DeKalb County's \$1.74 billion dollar budget.

Andy Yeoman – District 1

As a candidate for the DeKalb County Commission District 1, I bring a unique blend of experience from both the private sector and local government, highlighting my commitment to fiscal responsibility, strategic planning, and community engagement.

In my past, I was a business owner, personally responsible for making weekly payroll and managing a team that depended on me for their livelihood. This role instilled in me the importance of financial prudence, strategic decision-making, and the profound impact leadership can have on people's lives.

Currently, I hold a senior leadership position in a \$5-billion packaging company, where I'm responsible for overseeing a business unit with a budget exceeding \$31 million. This role has sharpened my skills in budget management, strategic planning, and operational efficiency, ensuring I'm well-prepared to handle large-scale financial decisions.

Moreover, during my tenure as a city council member in Doraville, I served on the budget committee, contributing to the management of the city's \$28 million budget. This experience gave me deep insights into the complexities of government budgeting, fiscal responsibility, and the necessity of transparent and accountable governance.

My combined experiences in leading both a private enterprise and contributing significantly to municipal governance equip me with a balanced perspective, ensuring that I understand the intricacies of managing large budgets, the importance of strategic long-term planning, and the value of listening to and serving the community. As a candidate for the DeKalb County Commission, I am committed to bringing this comprehensive approach to serve the people of District 1 effectively.

DISTRICT 4

Lance Hammonds – District 4

I have held leadership positions with my HOA, PTA, Fraternity, and other organizations that had budgets that I was ultimately responsible for. The largest budget I was personally responsible for is \$15 million as member of a commodity trading team for a global 500 corporation.

Chakira Johnson – District 4

As a Council Member we were responsible for overseeing the budget for the city, which is roughly \$5 million. In my career as a civil engineer and project manager I have overseen multimillion dollar engineering and construction management contracts.

Gabrielle Rogers – District 4

I am a strategic business professional expert with a proven track record of success in fiscal responsibility, business development and I possess the knowledge and leadership skills to guide teams on the path to success. My passion for speaking up for those that are unable to speak for themselves prompted me to accept a position as a Marketing Sales Director at a major entertainment holding company in metro Atlanta. I managed millions of

dollars to successfully create job opportunities, increase minimal wages and offer medical benefits to hourly wage workers.

DISTRICT 5

Gina Smith Mangham – District 5

I currently manage a trust valued at more than \$1M. Yet, I also have managed a non-profit community development corporation on a shoestring budget. At IBM, I was responsible for automated banking equipment worth millions of dollars. As an attorney, I was entrusted with handling "other people's money" in cases of substantial value. What is most important is not only the amount of money involved, but how it is managed. Fiscal responsibility requires special skill and experience that I have acquired.

DISTRICT 6

Ted Terry – District 6

Prior to the BOC I served as Chapter Director of the GA Sierra Club where our annual budget was between \$500,000 - \$750,000. And had a staff of 8.

3. What are the Top Three issues that you want to address for change in DeKalb County once you become a member of the BOC?

DISTRICT 1

Robert Patrick – District 1

- 1) Continue to improve the level of customer service that county staff provides to our residents and businesses. That includes improved responsiveness in everything from public safety to permitting, parks and utility billing;
- 2) Address the current labor shortage by working with my colleagues to make DeKalb County a desirable place for current and future County employees to work;
- 3) Address both the homelessness issue and animal shelter concerns;

Andy Yeoman – District 1

As a candidate for the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners (BOC), I am committed to restoring action and trust to the District 1 Commissioners Office. My campaign focuses on addressing three critical issues:

1. Improving Public Safety and EMS Response: Despite large tax increases to the police millage rate in 2023, our police and EMS departments suffer from high vacancy rates and slow response times. There is currently over \$10-million in vacancy in the police budget. EMS response times routinely exceed 45 minutes. I propose partnering with the DeKalb Board of Education to establish career pathways programs in public safety and EMS within local high schools. This initiative would provide students with essential training and secure job opportunities at graduation where they would rotate to different positions in the department until certification at 18 and 21.
2. Restoring Trust with residents and cities: My opponent's neglect of community concerns, especially regarding the expansion of PDK airport, has eroded public trust after refusing to meet with residents after they collected 3200 signatures on a change.org petition. His relationship with cities has deteriorated as he has grifted on a number of issues in the last four years. As a member of the BOC, I will prioritize community engagement and transparency. With the upcoming retirement at the DeKalb Municipal Association, and so many new commissioners, we have a unique opportunity to hit the reset button and work collaboratively address concerns, including annexation..
3. Focus on all living things: We have to fix the crisis with animal services and the crisis center. The county faces significant challenges with the underfunded animal services department and a mostly empty crisis center because there is not enough staff to run it. There is also a new crisis brewing as Atlanta clears the camps and an influx of unhoused individuals migrate toward the county. I will work with the CEO and BOC to make sure that proper attention is being made, develop comprehensive strategies to support the incoming unhoused population, and get people mental health solutions outside of the jail.

By addressing these issues, I aim to bring effective change and renewed trust to DeKalb County's governance.

DISTRICT 4

Lance Hammonds – District 4

Public Safety - Address recruitment and retention of public safety officers to include but not limited to, police, 911 operators and animal control staff.

Memorial Drive Revitalization - Investigate ways to move the revitalization plan forward. This will allow us to look at creative ways to attract business to the area and enhance the levels of customer service and efficiency in departments that interface with those willing to invest in our community.

Community Engagement - Develop a task force to increase the engagement of DeKalb citizens in their government. One of the recommendations of the DeKalb Charter Review Commission in the section titled Powers of the Commission, section 9(d) if approved would give the Board of Commissioners the authority to increase community engagement.

Chakira Johnson – District 4

As a civil engineer with over 20 years of experience, my top priority is improving the aging infrastructure. This includes the water and sewer system, stormwater conveyance system and roads and bridges. Another top priority is improving public safety, ensuring our law enforcement has the training, personnel and salaries needed to effectively protect the citizens. My third priority is economic development, ensuring that the County and especially District 4 has a strong economy. Our stronger economy will not only bring jobs to the district but start to address issues with affordable housing and the unhoused population.

Gabrielle Rogers – District 4

If elected, I will continue to serve our community by drafting policies that support Economic Development, Public Safety and Housing.

DISTRICT 5

Gina Smith Mangham – District 5

Listen to our constituents, be more responsive to their concerns, and generally, improve the way the county does business, through better fiscal oversight and transparency. Service contracts as well as those involving capital projects require ongoing review of the quality of work performed, cost efficiency, and value received. For example, almost every constituent I have spoken with complains that when potholes are filled utilizing SPLOST funds, the same potholes reappear a short time later in the same place. SPLOST reports show the number of projects completed, the location, and how much was spent. Yet, these projects lack quality control. All contracts need to be more closely scrutinized. Contract compliance should include measurable benchmarks for cost effectiveness, so that vendor performance can be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis, not just at renewal. As government leaders, we need to listen, learn, and adjust our policies and practices as appropriate.

DISTRICT 6

Ted Terry – District 6

Climate Resilience, Justice Reform, and Housing Access

4. What other areas do you consider needing improvement in DeKalb County and how would you change them?

DISTRICT 1

Robert Patrick – District 1

Rehabilitate or redevelop the old Presidential Parkway Hotel into a gateway feature we can all be proud of. I believe improvement to the site will bring considerable positive attention to this part of DeKalb and make a phenomenal gateway feature reminding everyone that DeKalb County is a desirable place for people and business.

Andy Yeoman – District 1

In addressing the need for improvement in DeKalb County, one critical area is the management and issuance of tax abatements, often seen as the "wild wild west" due to their lack of standardization and transparency. My opponent granted a lucrative abatement to a New York developer that 9 months later still doesn't even own the property on North Druid Hills Road. These abatements, intended to encourage development, can sometimes lead to unequal benefits and missed revenue for the county, affecting public services like education, transportation, and public safety.

I would propose a collaboration with state legislators to develop a more uniform and fair framework for granting tax abatements. This would entail creating guidelines that ensure tax incentives are awarded only when they align with broader economic goals, such as job creation, environmental sustainability, and equitable development across the county.

Moreover, I would support the eventual elimination of all of these authorities in Georgia. Instead, I would push for the formation of new regional development authorities that follow the boundaries of the 12 regional commissions. This would ensure a more cohesive and strategic approach to regional development. This alignment would facilitate a balance between attracting investment and safeguarding public interests, leading to a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

By implementing these changes, DeKalb County could foster a more transparent, equitable, and effective economic development strategy that benefits all residents, not just a select few. This reform would lead to a more sustainable and fair future for the county, ensuring that development efforts enhance the quality of life for all its citizens.

DISTRICT 4

Lance Hammonds – District 4

I have spoken with many developers and small businesses and there is a perception among them that DeKalb County is not the easiest place to do business. Many have decided to take their investment dollars elsewhere. I would work with the CEO and to develop plans to change this perception and seek ways to increase customer service in departments that interface with new business seeking to invest in our county

Chakira Johnson – District 4

In addition to my top priorities, I believe the county needs to improve watershed and the water billing process, improvements to the animal shelter, licensing and permitting need improvement to their processes.

Gabrielle Rogers – District 4

In addition to housing, economic development, and public safety, there are other important areas needing improvement in DeKalb County. These include infrastructure, education, environmental sustainability, and equity. To address these issues, I will focus on improving roads, public transportation, and supporting our local schools through internships and vocational training programs. I'll also prioritize protecting the environment, promoting social justice, and working with our local agencies to expand access to quality health services. By tackling these areas, we can create a better and more inclusive DeKalb County for everyone.

DISTRICT 5

Gina Smith Mangham – District 5

More specifically, we must recognize that increased investment in unincorporated DeKalb, particularly in the south and east, will benefit the county as a whole. We should start with code enforcement, picking up litter, and landscaping public spaces with low-maintenance alternatives to restore pride in our communities. Higher salary and enhanced benefit packages for police and firefighters must be a priority to attract, fill and retain the necessary level of personnel. Collaborating with existing agencies can help meet the need for human services, youth programs, job-training and employment. Regarding transportation and economic development, South/East DeKalb has been hindered because we have virtually no public transportation centers. We need to establish public-private partnerships to create transportation hubs with denser housing options that will increase our markets. This will attract more desirable economic development such as higher quality restaurants, retail establishments, service providers, and expanded entrepreneurial opportunities. I support development of a major entertainment venue or amphitheater accessible to all DeKalb residents as well as visitors from outside the county. We have paid consultants to develop a number of plans for all kinds of county initiatives; we need to implement some of them.

DISTRICT 6

Ted Terry – District 6

We need to perform an operational audit of all county operations, in 2024/2025, to get a better understanding of the inefficiencies that exist within our various departments.

5. DeKalb County used to have a more robust #311 platform for fielding and tracking questions, problems, and complaints from DeKalb citizens; then the budget for #311 was cut significantly. As a member of the BOC, what would you do to make the #311 system more functional, transparent, and effective?

DISTRICT 1

Robert Patrick – District 1

Since taking office, I have consistently supported and invested in 311 to expand their coverage to include calls for roads and drainage, code compliance and water billing. In last year's budget, I supported increasing staff in 311. I will continue to advocate and encourage the expansion of this customer service platform for the county. Additionally, I support expanding this customer assistance program in planning and sustainability.

Andy Yeoman – District 1

It's encouraging to note that the 2024 budget has already addressed part of this need by funding four additional positions and increasing starting salaries to \$20 an hour. The #311 centers budget has increased approximately a 40% over the last four years.

However, I recognize that enhancing our #311 system extends beyond just budget increases. As a future member of the Board of Commissioners, I am committed to not only sustaining and expanding this financial commitment but also ensuring these resources translate into tangible improvements. In my view, the true measure of success for our #311 system is not just in logging issues but in resolving them promptly and efficiently.

From personal experience and feedback from our citizens, I am aware of the current gaps — such as prolonged resolution times and lack of resources for essential services. These are unacceptable delays that undermine trust and efficiency.

Improving the #311 system is more than a budgetary commitment; it's a pledge to our residents for a more responsive, transparent, and effective government. I am dedicated to making this a reality for DeKalb County.

DISTRICT 4

Lance Hammonds – District 4

I would increase the budget to attract and retain first responders, this would include 311 operators. I would look at other benefits such as housing incentives that may have a larger impact.

Chakira Johnson – District 4

I would like to see information on why the budget was cut and how well the system was performing to determine what steps are needed to improve the system.

Gabrielle Rogers – District 4

I would prioritize making the #311 system more functional, transparent, and effective. This means securing adequate funding, upgrading technology for easier use, and ensuring transparency by providing regular updates on requests. I'll also encourage community engagement to improve the system based on residents' feedback. By investing in these improvements, we can better serve the needs of DeKalb County residents and enhance satisfaction with county services.

DISTRICT 5

Gina Smith Mangham – District 5

The Administration should track questions, problems, and complaints regarding service delivery on a departmental level, with a designated person who is responsible for receiving, following-up, regular reporting, and making specific recommendations for improvements in each department/service center. This information should be available to the general public.

DISTRICT 6

Ted Terry – District 6

311 is an old technology that needs to be adapted for modern times. Instead of being a phone only service, we must incorporate texting, in website chat service and AI chat bot modules to more quickly get information on basic services to constituents while expediting more complicated concerns to the relevant depts or policy committees.

6. DeKalb County has over 40 citizen advisory and oversight boards. Neither the BOC nor the Administration has evaluated the administration and reporting of these boards for many years. Board positions in multiple boards have been vacant for months and years or filled repeatedly by the same people. How much of a priority is this for you to tackle when you enter office? What would you do to make sure these boards are functioning effectively, and more citizens have opportunities to apply and serve on these boards?

DISTRICT 1

Robert Patrick – District 1

Citizen advisory and oversight boards present a tremendous opportunity to enhance citizen engagement and understanding of the County's activities. I support reviewing a complete list and description of each board and determine the purpose and need for that board. It may be that existing boards can be modified to foster the much needed communication and dialogue from the neighborhood level

Andy Yeoman – District 1

The health and functionality of these boards are crucial to the democratic process and to ensuring that the voices of our citizens are heard and acted upon.

I am fully aware, thanks to research conducted by your organization last year, of the dire situation we face regarding the administration and reporting of these boards. It is critical to address these issues to ensure that our boards are representative, effective, and accountable.

I have firsthand experience with these challenges, notably with the Assembly TAD Advisory Board, which has not had a quorum since 2016 due to unfulfilled appointments by the county's two appointees that the CEO is responsible for. This is a clear failure in governance and one that directly impacts our community's ability to effectively plan and implement development projects.

I am open to introducing a hearing officer process where legally permissible, to streamline decision-making and have fewer boards and commissions. i.e. I think a hearing officer can hear a taxi appeal.

I believe we can restore trust in our local government, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our advisory boards, and create a more engaged and representative DeKalb County.

DISTRICT 4

Lance Hammonds – District 4

Citizen engagement is a top priority for me. I believe that an engaged community has the power to transform DeKalb County into the community of choice for diverse young families. As a member of the Charter Review Commission, we investigated ways to increase community engagement. We recommended that the charter be changed to give the Board of Commissioners the power to find ways to increase community engagement.

Chakira Johnson – District 4

Advisory and oversight boards are a very important aspect of County government. It is imperative that the boards be evaluated to ensure they are acting effectively and within their scope or mission. For those boards that have a lot of interest I would be open to establishing term limits. However, there are other boards where it can be harder to find members and term limits may hinder their work. I would be in support of conducting a study to determine the feasibility of the existing boards, board members and what changes could be made to better serve the citizens.

Gabrielle Rogers – District 4

Addressing the oversight and functionality of DeKalb County's citizen advisory and oversight boards would be a priority for my administration. It's crucial that these boards operate effectively and inclusively to represent the diverse interests of our community. To tackle this issue, I would initiate a comprehensive evaluation of the administration and reporting processes of these boards, identifying areas for improvement and implementing necessary reforms. This evaluation would include assessing the criteria for board appointments, addressing vacancies, and ensuring fair and transparent appointment processes. Additionally, I would work to increase awareness of these boards among the public and create more accessible opportunities for citizens to apply and serve.

DISTRICT 5

Gina Smith Mangham – District 5

Citizen engagement is a priority for me. By special committee, I recommend that each Commissioner evaluate all citizen advisory and oversight boards for need, function, and effectiveness in the respective districts. Based on the findings and recommendations, the boards can then be restructured. Also, uniform procedures and protocols should be put in place for selection, terms, reporting, and review at regular intervals.

DISTRICT 6

Ted Terry – District 6

The review of the boards and committees has been completed, and a report is expected to be presented in the next month or so. Our top priority is to consider what boards are no longer relevant, as well as consider updating and adjusting the mission and goals of some rather than disbanding.

7. An ongoing issue that is top of mind among residents is annexation into existing cities. What is your stance on annexation of unincorporated DeKalb areas into adjacent cities?

DISTRICT 1

Robert Patrick – District 1

As many of you know, I am a former municipal employee, former city councilman and former President of the DeKalb Municipal Association. I support the will of the voters. If they choose to join an existing city by any of the allowable methods under state law, it is their decision. However, I have concerns about how two cities have approached the 60% annexation method. Together, they have spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on what appears to be an extremely questionable effort to pull residents into their jurisdictions. Over the course of at least a year they hired a company to collect signatures and to create maps to their advantage. After all this effort, their gerrymandered maps and questionably obtained voter signatures, they still could not get close to 50%, let alone the required 60% approval. I think this would be an excellent case study for the legislature to review and come up with guardrails to protect our residents from potentially fraudulent behavior.

Andy Yeoman – District 1

I believe that the question of annexation of unincorporated areas into adjacent cities should be approached with careful consideration, ensuring that all stakeholders are heard and that there is clear, accurate, and accessible information available to all affected parties. This has not been the case in the last twelve months.

I strongly advocate for the principle of letting the people vote on annexation issues, and that it should emerge from the grassroots level, reflecting the genuine wishes and needs of the community members themselves. . The residents of both the unincorporated areas and the adjacent cities should have the right to decide their future based on a full understanding of the facts and potential outcomes. This democratic process ensures that the will of the community guides the development and growth of our county.

However, the right to vote must be underpinned by access to clear and accurate information. It is imperative that citizens are not only informed about the immediate effects of annexation but also about the long-term implications for their communities. As such, if elected, I would work to establish transparent, accessible, and comprehensive educational initiatives to ensure that all voters have the knowledge they need to make an informed decision when they go to the polls.

DISTRICT 4

Lance Hammonds – District 4

I would work to increase levels of customer service to unincorporated DeKalb to mitigate the desire of citizens in these areas to join nearby cities.

Chakira Johnson – District 4

Any annexation actions that would include a substantial area should be done in partnership with the County and the municipality. This will ensure that the interests of all both parties are addressed and that the citizens in the impacted areas continue to have the services provided to them.

Gabrielle Rogers – District 4

Currently, the development of and decision to approve the charter for incorporation lies with the advocating body and General Assembly, respectively. There is no clause requiring either institution to garner input or feedback from the citizens that will be impacted by municipalization. Only after the act has been approved are residents

permitted to vote in favor of or against the single option that has been presented before them. I am an advocate for informing, involving and surveying the community that will be impacted prior to approval of the charter.

DISTRICT 5

Gina Smith Mangham – District 5

The will of the citizens will continue to depend largely on the level of service they receive, real or perceived, from our county government. However, there should be restrictions on "cherry picking" commercial properties and prime residential areas by setting objective criteria.

DISTRICT 6

Ted Terry – District 6

Annexation must include all of the stakeholders in a particular area including impacts of unaffected residents and property owners as it relates to service delivery and planning and zoning issues.

8. Another ongoing issue that is top of mind among residents is the formation of new cities in DeKalb County. What is your stance on further creation of new cities in DeKalb?

DISTRICT 1

Robert Patrick – District 1

Again, I support the will of the voters. The voters should consider the financial viability of any new city as significant non-residential properties have already been incorporated into the tax base of existing cities.

Andy Yeoman – District 1

The decision to create new municipalities is not one to be taken lightly, and it must be approached with a clear focus on the desires and needs of our residents. My stance on this issue is straightforward but nuanced: I believe that any further creation of new cities in DeKalb County must be fundamentally community-driven. I want to spend more time fixing the issues that people are upset about and wanting to leave.

I recognize the potential benefits of having more localized governance structures for addressing local issues. Local leaders, who live in and deeply understand their communities, are often better positioned to address specific local concerns and priorities. This localized approach can lead to more effective and tailored solutions, enhancing community well-being and satisfaction.

I personally believe that the delivery of county-wide services and utilities would improve greatly if more time and focus was spent on them and residents were served by a local city, but this decision needs to be made individually by all voters.

DISTRICT 4

Lance Hammonds – District 4

I believe in the citizens should have the right to determine the form of government they want if others are not adversely impacted.

Chakira Johnson – District 4

Having represented one of the oldest cities in DeKalb, I do understand the value cities can provide to residents. Any plan to create a new city would need to be well thought out, show the support of the citizens and a strong plan for governance. I believe any new cities should be full-service cities, and not provide only the bare minimal services.

Gabrielle Rogers – District 4

Once deemed the second wealthiest county in the nation for black opulence, DeKalb is gradually losing its position as one of the richest locales among all affluent demographics. The exponential increase in cost of living partnered with lack of economic growth has inhibited the sustainability of many urban communities. Unfortunately, this correlates with a reduction in services rendered for public safety, deferred economic development, housing insecurities, lack of protections for small businesses and more. While I understand the rationale for municipalization, I also recognize that there are other options to address these issues including electing qualified county leaders, increasing community input by urging leadership to implement NAPU's or file a petition with the delegation proposing a consensus study identifying the percentage of neighbors familiar with the cityhood movement and their position on incorporation.

DISTRICT 5

Gina Smith Mangham – District 5

Much of our county has already become part of a municipality. County government will always be needed to provide certain crucial services to the cities as well as unincorporated areas. As for the creation of new, additional cities, my goal is to raise the level of service and investment to where our residents do not see the need to seek alternative leadership and control. No matter what the form of government, constituents generally want the same things -- cost-effective, high-quality service delivery; safe, well-maintained communities, amenities such as parks and recreation, good schools, transportation options and sensible, non-invasive economic growth. People also need to be heard and their opinions respected by their elected officials. Any government is only as good as the people leading it.

DISTRICT 6

Ted Terry – District 6

New cities at this point would further Balkanize the county government and various departments and could create greater regionalization of communities at the expense of countywide services and big vision initiatives that can only be achieved in a countywide context.

9. There is a technology platform called OpenGov that is a tool many counties and cities across the nation use for providing governmental accountability and transparency to their constituents. Would you support adopting OpenGov or a similar platform in DeKalb County for this purpose?

WHY or WHY NOT?

DISTRICT 1

Robert Patrick – District 1

I whole heartedly support OpenGov. The city of Suwanee currently uses the platform. It makes government finances more approachable and easier to understand.

Andy Yeoman – District 1

Transparency and accountability form the bedrock of a well-functioning democracy. Integrating technology platforms like OpenGov can substantially enhance these crucial elements by democratizing access to financial records, budgetary decisions, and other key government operations, ensuring they are more visible and understandable to the public.

However, I would need more information on the county's "readiness" to implement this. For example, the DeKalb School District's ongoing ERP system implementation, which is millions over budget and has been in progress for years, serves as a cautionary tale. Consolidating procurement, planning, budgeting, permitting, and asset management into one cohesive system can offer substantial efficiencies and provides residents with a "single pane of glass" to see inside the whole thing.

DISTRICT 4

Lance Hammonds – District 4

I am not familiar with this platform. I am in favor of more transparency for citizens. I would be open to learning more about this tool and the benefits to county staff and citizens.

Chakira Johnson – District 4

While on Stone Mountain City Council I supported the use of ClearGov. The software can be used to provide transparency with governmental finances. I would be supportive of implementing a similar platform for DeKalb County.

Gabrielle Rogers – District 4

I would support the adoption of technology platforms like OpenGov in DeKalb County to enhance governmental accountability and transparency for our constituents. Such platforms provide invaluable tools for residents to access and understand government spending, budget allocation, and performance metrics. By implementing OpenGov or a similar platform, we can promote greater transparency in decision-making processes, empower residents with access to vital information, and foster trust between government officials and the community.

DISTRICT 5

Gina Smith Mangham – District 5

I have not had direct experience with OpenGov. However, from what I have read, I support exploration and implementation of effective tools that will streamline DeKalb County operations and increase governmental accountability and transparency to constituents.

DISTRICT 6

Ted Terry – District 6

OpenGov has been budgeted and should be implemented for the end of this budget cycle FY 24

10. DeKalb has just completed the first comprehensive review of its Organizational Act in over 40 years. A set of specific recommendations have been made by the Charter Review Commission and its report has been presented to the CEO and BOC. Which, if any, of the recommendations would you NOT support being changed in the Organizational Act and why?

DISTRICT 1

Robert Patrick – District 1

Rather than say what I do or don't support, I think equitability is the lens to view the recommendations of the Charter Review Commission. I believe good governance is an iterative process where all laws and ordinances, including charters, should be reviewed at least once a decade. I believe the intent of the reviews is to ensure that accountability is clear and that services are delivered to the residents as efficiently, deliberatively, openly and timely as possible. I appointed a District 1 representative that was involved with the writing of the City of Dunwoody's charter. However, it became clear that the opportunity for larger changes would not be possible. Making things make sense is my top priority. While reviewing the proposals recommended by the Charter Review Commission, I believe they need additional consideration by the Board of Commissioners to ensure we can deliver on our county's commitments to the residents and businesses throughout DeKalb. As public officials we need to listen to the public while ensuring that the power within the governing authority is balanced.

Andy Yeoman – District 1

The Charter Review Commission has performed admirably, producing a final draft that, in my view, merited immediate approval and inclusion on the November ballot. I disagree with the remarks from some commissioners who deemed the process that started in January of 2020 "rushed."

DISTRICT 4

Lance Hammonds – District 4

I served as a Charter Review Commissioner. We completed the review, and our recommendations are now being considered by the CEO, the Board of Commissioners, and our legislative delegation. Our work and recommendations were based on how the county can deliver better service to the citizens of DeKalb County. There were 3 recommendations I believe will deliver better service to the citizens is

- (1) requiring the CEO to present their budget to the Board of Commissioners by Oct 1 to allow them to review and approve by December 31
- (2) empowering the Board of Commissioners to seek ways to develop more citizen engagement and
- (3) setting intervals for future review of the charter.

Chakira Johnson – District 4

I support the changes presented by the Charter Review Commission and thank them for their diligent work.

Gabrielle Rogers – District 4

I would carefully consider the recommendations from the Charter Review Commission. With an ever-so changing landscape and growing population, the needs of our county are always evolving. I do believe the charter should be reviewed every five years to serve the best needs of our future. Ultimately, I would support changes that enhance our government's transparency, accountability, and efficiency while upholding these foundational principles.

DISTRICT 5

Gina Smith Mangham – District 5

I support the work of the Charter Review Commission and its reported recommendations. We must continue this important work to update and improve the Org Act.

DISTRICT 6

Ted Terry – District 6

I'm in support of all recommendations from the charter review commission.

11. One of the recommendations for change in the Organizational Act is for the Board of Commissioners is to establish one or more citizen engagement groups intentionally designed to foster more “bottom-up” communication and dialogue from and with neighborhood residents about planning and zoning issues, but also potentially other concerns involving multiple departments. Would you support the development of such programs? WHY or WHY NOT?

DISTRICT 1

Robert Patrick – District 1

Any opportunity to enhance citizen engagement and understanding of the County’s activities is a discussion the governing authority should consider. It may be more practical that we look at the existing citizen advisory and oversight boards to determine if their purposes are still relevant or if they can be reconstituted to foster the much needed communication and dialogue.

Andy Yeoman – District 1

I would support establishing citizen engagement groups that leads to more active and meaningful participation from community members leading to more democratic and community-focused decision-making.

By fostering open dialogue and bottom-up communication, these groups can improve the trust between the community and local government. When residents see that their opinions are being considered, it can enhance the transparency and perceived legitimacy of the governmental process.

DISTRICT 4

Lance Hammonds – District 4

As a member of the Charter Review Commission, community engagement is one of the areas I researched and developed as a recommendation giving the Board of Commissioners the power to look at ways to increase community engagement. This recommended change is in section 9(d) of our recommendation. I believe in the power of engaged citizens to transform itself.

Chakira Johnson – District 4

Yes, I would be in support of establishing a citizen engagement group. Open communication with the citizens is crucial for an effective government.

Gabrielle Rogers – District 4

I support the development of citizen engagement groups. These programs foster dialogue between residents and officials, ensuring that community voices are heard on planning, zoning, and other issues. By empowering residents to actively participate in decision-making, we build trust and strengthen our neighborhoods.

DISTRICT 5

Gina Smith Mangham – District 5

I wholehearted support this concept. After working on zoning issues for more that 20 years, I support a more pro-active and democratic approach to citizen engagement to address zoning issues fairly and more efficiently. The typical response to citizen input in District 5 has too often been to ignore it, defer it, and allow ongoing requests for modifications for far too long. This requires citizens and developers alike to appear again and again without any clear, lasting or enforceable resolution. Fostering more dialogue with residents is necessary to adequately address concerns in various county departments.

DISTRICT 6

Ted Terry – District 6

This could be an empowering initiative if it was focused on specific policy areas such as environmental justice or transit. The current setup of community council and planning commission is robust to cover zoning and land use issues, however those boards serve mostly as reactionary to applications, when they could benefit from proactive measures such as engaging in the long range planning dept to develop community driven big picture solutions for the challenges DeKalb faces as a growing community.