



Candidate Questionnaire for DeKalb Board of Commissioners District 7

Summary of Responses

September 26, 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. All four candidates participated.

Those Who Responded

Jacqueline Adams

Kenneth Chung Royal

Dr. Ladena Bolton

Demetrius McCoy

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?

Jacqueline Adams – District 7

I have been deeply involved in DeKalb County's community and government affairs for many years, bringing a wealth of experience, commitment, and proven leadership. My journey began with grassroots efforts, organizing initiatives to combat food deserts and drive economic development in over 20 communities. As an advocate for seniors and veterans, I have led programs focused on education, safety, and support, including founding a community choir, women's empowerment groups, and a veteran's advocacy organization.

In 2015, I was elected as a Post Seat Holder for House District 86, a role that allowed me to influence local governance and advocate for residents' needs. My experience extends to serving as the first female Executive Administrator and Director for two international nonprofits, and as COO of a homeless organization, equipping me with strategic oversight and administrative skills. My diverse background, including managing senior projects and co-founding a youth mentoring program, has prepared me to effectively represent DeKalb on the Board of Commissioners.

Kenneth Chung Royal – District 7

I have been deeply involved in DeKalb County through various roles, including working on Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts and as an active member of the DeKalb Democrats, the Democratic Party of Georgia, and the African American Caucus. I have also partnered with organizations like the NAACP and DeKalb Young Democrats to engage and empower our community. My focus has been on activating young people to advocate for themselves and ensuring that my neighbors have a voice in local matters. I have served as a resource for residents, helping them navigate DeKalb's often complex processes and ensuring their concerns are heard.

Dr. Ladena Bolton – District 7

I have been an advocate in the Peachcrest Community and across Super District 7 for at least 10 years. As a homeowner, mother of school-aged boys and wife of a DeKalb Science Teacher, my advocacy ranges from enhancing safety in our neighborhoods to ensuring equitable distribution of resources. I serve as an Executive Member of the DeKalb Democrats and former VP of the DeKalb Young Democrats Benefit Corporation. Under my leadership, we strengthened our field organizing strategies to help elect Georgia's first Jewish and Black Senators as well as helped make ages 18-35 the fastest growing voter population in 2020. As the cofounder of Bolton Legacy, we helped acquire over \$320,000 in resources for DeKalb families over the past 4 years, including supplying the school district with 10,000 gloves and over 350 masks so they could continue to serve meals to our students during the COVID pandemic. In addition to a plethora of other issues, more recently, I have advocated on behalf of the 80,000 residents that live in both District 3 and Super District 7 in order to urge the BOC to provide an outlined plan of support for those without representation.

DeKalb is at a critical point in which we have the potential to excel exponentially or continue down the same path of mediocrity. In order to attain a better quality of life for all residents, we have to elect a candidate with a proven track record of leadership, managing large budgets, implementing strategies to improve the institutions outcomes and diplomacy in working with a variety of personalities. I have worked as a Scientist and Program Manager for 2 of the most recognizable institutions in the world. In these global roles, I have managed millions in assets, been

responsible for implementing processes that have saved millions in budget allocations, been responsible for the quality of service and product delivered to the customer and trained departments on delivering quality service and outcomes.

I understand that merely having government experience is not enough. Leadership experience that mirrors that responsibilities of a Commissioner are what really matter. If we want better, we have to do something different. Based on my track record of service, you can have Better With Bolton.

Demetrius McCoy – District 7

As someone born and raised in DeKalb County, my connection to the community runs deep. My work as a pastor allowed me to serve not just as a spiritual leader, but as a trusted advocate for the people, providing support, guidance, and solutions to those in need. I've witnessed firsthand the challenges our residents face and have been driven to help uplift and unite our community.

In my role as a policy analyst for the DeKalb County CEO's office, I gained valuable insight into the inner workings of county government, focusing on crafting and analyzing policies that address key issues in our region. This experience helped me understand the complex balance between policy, budgetary constraints, and public need, and I've worked alongside other county officials to develop solutions that serve the best interests of DeKalb residents.

As Chief of Staff for District 5, I had the opportunity to work directly with the Board of Commissioners and constituents, facilitating communication, managing district projects, and engaging in problem-solving efforts. This role sharpened my skills in navigating government processes while maintaining strong ties to the community, ensuring that the voices of our residents were heard and their concerns addressed effectively.

Additionally, I've served on the Advisory Board of my Homeowners Association, where I worked closely with neighbors to address local concerns and promote community cohesion. This involvement has allowed me to stay rooted in the day-to-day realities of residents and understand the importance of strong, responsive leadership.

Each of these experiences has uniquely equipped me to serve on the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, where I can continue to advocate for the needs of the community I've called home my entire life.

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

Jacqueline Adams – District 7

I have extensive experience managing finances in both the nonprofit and private sectors. Currently, I oversee and approve annual budgets, including managing a \$3 million budget for various organizations I own and co-own. My responsibilities include financial planning, accounting, and ensuring compliance with financial regulations. As CEO of Adams Enterprise and co-founder of Restoration International Ministries, I have gained hands-on experience in financial management, including payroll, contractor oversight, and resource allocation.

My expertise extends to budgeting and financial oversight within the nonprofit community, where I have led initiatives impacting vulnerable populations like seniors and veterans. These experiences have reinforced the importance of transparency, strategic planning, and fiscal responsibility—skills I will bring to the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners to ensure efficient and effective use of public funds.

Kenneth Chung Royal – District 7

While I haven't directly managed large organizational budgets, I have successfully overseen smaller budgets in various roles. My educational background in Public Administration and business management, combined with my leadership experience and financial planning skills, equips me to effectively manage DeKalb County's budget. I am confident in my ability to ensure fiscal responsibility and strategically allocate resources for the benefit of our community.

Dr. Ladena Bolton – District 7

As a Scientist and Program Manager for the Coca Cola company and the US Army, I have managed millions of dollars in assets which includes several hundred million in new project implementation and a couple million in sustainability of those programs and projects. Not only do I have experience managing budgets for projects and programs across Georgia, but I have been responsible for managing them across the country and globally. The benefit of this experience is that I know how to work with an array of diverse communities with significantly different needs. As a Scientist, I am formally trained to identify the need of a community and develop tailor made strategies to address their concerns. This is very important when considering the diversity of residents and businesses across Super District 7.

Demetrius McCoy – District 7

In my current role as Chief of Staff, I've managed an aggregate budget of \$1.4 million, which includes overseeing an operating budget of \$465,000. This responsibility involves careful financial planning, ensuring that funds are allocated efficiently across various projects and operational needs. I work closely with our team to track spending, analyze financial reports, and ensure compliance with all budgetary guidelines. My experience managing these budgets has strengthened my ability to balance fiscal discipline with the need to deliver impactful services to our community.

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?

Jacqueline Adams – District 7

My top three priorities are public safety, homelessness, and animal welfare. Public safety is critical to a thriving community, and I plan to enhance coordination between law enforcement, emergency services, and community organizations to ensure faster response times and increased visibility of first responders. Homelessness is at an all-time high, and I will advocate for sustainable solutions, including affordable housing, mental health and

addiction services, and job training programs. Animal welfare also needs attention, and I will work to improve shelter conditions, increase funding for spay and neuter programs, and strengthen partnerships with local animal welfare organizations.

Kenneth Chung Royal – District 7

Public Safety: I will advocate for better funding for law enforcement and emergency services, as well as community programs that address the root causes of crime.

Infrastructure: I will push for improvements in our roads, transit systems, and technology to make DeKalb a more efficient and accessible county.

Affordable Housing: I plan to work closely with housing developers and government agencies to increase affordable housing options, ensuring that all residents have access to quality living spaces.

Dr. Ladena Bolton – District 7

We have to start by getting back to the basics because our county is only as strong as our most underserved communities. That means we have to focus on Quality of Life, Safer Neighborhoods and County Services for Businesses and Residents. Quality of Life includes addressing our water insecurities, affordable housing deficit and transportation concerns. Safer Neighborhoods extends beyond adding more police officers, but also includes violence prevention strategies, mental health support and code enforcement. County Services requires good governance, quality products and projects, and streamlined services.

Demetrius McCoy – District 7

Once I am elected to the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners (BOC), my focus will be on addressing these three key issues to drive meaningful change:

1. **Safe Communities** — Ensuring the safety of DeKalb County residents remains my top priority. I will work to strengthen relationships between law enforcement and the community, advocate for better training and resources for officers, and support programs that address the root causes of crime. Expanding mental health services and rehabilitation programs will also be key to reducing recidivism and promoting long-term safety. I'll also work to make sure that we have the best paid police in the region.
2. **Infrastructure and Transportation Improvements**- : DeKalb County's infrastructure requires significant upgrades to support growth. I will prioritize improving roads and expanding public transportation options.. I'll advocate for smart, sustainable development that addresses the needs of both current and future residents.
3. **Service Delivery** — Effective public service delivery is essential for maintaining trust between the county and its residents. I will push for improvements in the county's responsiveness. By leveraging technology and streamlining internal processes, we can create a more efficient, transparent, and responsive government that better serves DeKalb's citizens.

These three focus areas will help build a safer, more connected, and well-served DeKalb County.

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

Jacqueline Adams – District 7

A major area of DeKalb County that is in great need of some significant improvement is Code Enforcement. It must be assured that code enforcement is being applied equitably and effectively and that the officers on staff are carrying out their inspections and enforcing the regulations as they are meant to be. In addressing the overall effectiveness and accountability within the department, I suggest improved oversight measures to monitor more effectively the activity of inspections and outcomes therefrom. Regular audits and performance reviews will allow the enforcement practices to be consistent, transparent, and per community expectations. Closer scrutiny of accountability will redeem public trust and ensure Code Enforcement serves all residents fairly.

Also, a historically big issue of contention has been the water billing system in DeKalb County, which residents say has consistently overcharged them and failed to address their account problems. My priority is ensuring that each outstanding water account and overcharged bill is dealt with fully, completely, and fairly. Unpaid accounts need to be flagged, discrepancies investigated, and development of a clear way forward on how to settle unpaid accounts.

This will help us come up with a focused plan for redress and prevention.

Kenneth Chung Royal – District 7

Economic Growth: There is an urgent need to attract and retain small businesses, particularly in underserved areas. I will work on providing incentives for businesses to invest in DeKalb, promoting local jobs, and fostering balanced growth in the region.

Animal Welfare: Our shelters are overcrowded, and more attention needs to be placed on improving conditions and adoption programs. I will work to enhance partnerships with non-profits and expand community education on responsible pet ownership.

Dr. Ladena Bolton – District 7

Support for our animal shelter, environmental justice and community programs for youth and seniors need to be addressed and/or initiated by the end of this term. To address current needs, I would advocate for the expansion of the animal shelter facility, but I also support partnering with nonprofits and experts to identify ways to reduce the number of animals held in the shelter. Pets add value to our lives and we should consistently look for ways to allow them to continue to add value to our communities.

One in 7 residents are categorized as senior members of our community. DeKalb has one of the most active senior populations in the state. It would be to the counties benefit to ensure that we consider accessibility and mobility when improving upon infrastructure projects, new developments, extra curricular activities and affordable housing for our seniors.

In order to address environmental justice, we have to acknowledge that this not only includes placement of landfills and locations where our water insecurities are concentrated. It also includes over proliferation of dollar stores, code enforcement and lack of zoning for affordable housing. Ordinances must be proposed to manage

each of these areas in order to increase safety, property values and quality of life. I would also advocate to bring in an expert environmental scientist to help guide the direction of these environmental projects and see them to completion.

Demetrius McCoy – District 7

In addition to public safety, infrastructure, and service delivery, I see several other areas in DeKalb County that need improvement. Here's how I would address them:

1. Economic Development - DeKalb County has great potential for growth, but we must focus on attracting businesses and strengthening local businesses. I would work to streamline the permitting process, which has been a significant barrier to new business development. By making the process faster and more transparent, we can encourage more businesses to set up in DeKalb. Additionally, would advocate to increase funding for Decide DeKalb Development Authority so that we can provide more incentives for businesses to locate in areas of the county that have the greatest need for development.

2. Fixing the Permitting Process — DeKalb's permitting process has been slow and inefficient, frustrating both residents and businesses. I will push for a comprehensive overhaul of the system, utilizing technology to streamline approvals and cut down on wait times. This would not only improve the experience for residents and business owners but also help stimulate economic development by making it easier to start and expand projects.

3. Education and Youth Development — While education is largely managed by the school system, the county can play a significant role in youth development. I would work to expand after-school programs, mentorship opportunities, and job training initiatives through our Office of Youth Services and Parks & Recreation Department. By investing in our youth, we can reduce crime and create a path for future success, helping to break cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement in certain parts of the county.

4. Environmental Sustainability and Clean-Up — DeKalb County must take immediate steps to address litter and improve our environment. I would propose stiffening the penalties for those who litter in DeKalb and introduce legislation to invest in technology to monitor high traffic areas for dumping. In addition I would sponsor district-wide cleanup initiatives. One additional measure that I would encourage are more bulky collection days — so that residents could get rid of bulky items without the need to feel they have to always pay extra.

By addressing these critical issues, we can create a cleaner, more business-friendly, and better quality of life for all DeKalb County residents.

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?

Jacqueline Adams – District 7

To revitalize the 311 system, I will advocate for a comprehensive technology upgrade and restore full staffing levels. Implementing a modern Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system will streamline service

requests, track response times, and ensure accountability. Enhanced online and mobile accessibility will allow residents to report issues in real-time, and a feedback loop will provide valuable insights into service improvement.

Kenneth Chung Royal – District 7

I would advocate for restoring and modernizing the #311 system. Having an efficient platform where citizens can report issues and track progress is essential for transparency. I will work to ensure that it is fully staffed and that there is proper training for employees to deliver timely, professional service. Additionally, I would push for more robust tracking and reporting features so that residents can see how issues are being resolved in real time.

Dr. Ladena Bolton – District 7

I would support a higher budget allocation to fund the #311 platform. This would include adequate hiring of skilled professionals, initial and re-familiarization training for employees and the purchase and sustainability of equipment to handle the workload.

Demetrius McCoy – District 7

I completely agree. To strengthen the 311 system, I would focus on the following key actions:

1. Restore and Increase Budget — Advocate for a budget increase specifically allocated to #311 to ensure it is adequately funded. This would allow for the hiring of additional staff and the implementation of necessary technological upgrades.
2. Fully Staff the #311 Center — Ensure that the #311 center is fully staffed with trained personnel who can handle inquiries and complaints effectively. This includes hiring enough staff to manage call volumes and provide timely responses to residents.
3. Develop a Comprehensive Mobile App — Implement a user-friendly mobile app that allows residents to easily submit their concerns, track the status of their requests, and receive updates. The app should be designed to be intuitive and accessible, similar to those used in major cities across the country.
4. Upgrade Technology and Operations — Invest in modern technology to enhance the functionality of the #311 system. This includes integrating advanced tracking and reporting tools, improving data management, and ensuring the system can handle various types of requests efficiently.
5. Ensure Full Operational Capability — Make sure the #311 center operates at full capacity, with clear protocols for handling and escalating issues. Regularly review and improve processes to ensure effectiveness and responsiveness.

By taking these steps, we can transform #311 into a robust and efficient platform that effectively addresses resident concerns and improves overall service delivery in DeKalb County.

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?

Jacqueline Adams – District 7

Addressing the stagnant appointments and lack of evaluation on DeKalb’s 40 citizen advisory and oversight boards is a top priority. I will initiate a comprehensive review to assess their effectiveness and ensure compliance with operational standards. I will advocate for transparent recruitment processes and term limits to bring fresh, diverse voices to these boards, reflecting the broader community.

Kenneth Chung Royal – District 7

Making sure that advisory boards are diverse and function effectively is a priority for me. I believe in empowering residents to have a voice in local government. I would initiate an evaluation of these boards, ensuring that they are transparent in their operations and open to new members. By promoting broader outreach, we can ensure that the boards represent the entire community and bring fresh perspectives to decision-making processes.

Dr. Ladena Bolton – District 7

This is a great question. DeKalb has a habit of nominating the same handful of folks to serve on multiple different boards. This hinders our ability to serve the county's diverse population. I would start by auditing the need and effectiveness of each oversight committee because as the county grows and the economy changes, the added value for the creation of some of these boards has been diminished.

In addition, I understand that as the co-Chair of the Affirmative Action Committee for the DeKalb Democrats organization, it is important to have a representative from as many of the communities willing to serve DeKalb as we can recruit. That means we need to elect a Commissioner that is not institutionalized by the status quo because they have worked in the county all of their career. I am the candidate with community advocacy experience, a diverse accumulation of leadership experiences and am committed to broadening our reach to be reflective of our county population.

We have to actively solicit participation from the community by reaching out to grassroots organizations and committees.

Demetrius McCoy – District 7

Given my experience in managing board appointments and understanding the importance of filling vacancies, I would prioritize the following actions to improve the management of DeKalb County’s advisory and oversight boards:

1. Establish a Regular Review Process — Introduce legislation that would implement a systematic review process to regularly assess board vacancies and member activity. This process would ensure timely identification and filling of vacancies, as well as address issues related to inactive members.
2. Enhance Coordination with the Clerk’s Office — Collaborate with the Clerk’s office to maintain accurate and current information about board appointments. This partnership would help ensure that all data related to board members, vacancies, and terms are up-to-date and accurately reflected.
3. Revamp the Appointment Website — Work on developing a robust online platform where residents can view available board positions and submit their applications. The website should be user-friendly, providing clear information on how to apply and what qualifications are required.
4. Create a Transparent Appointment Process — Ensure the appointment process is transparent and accessible. This includes clear communication about how positions are filled, the criteria for selection, and regular updates on the status of applications.
5. Implement a Succession Plan — Develop a succession plan to address situations where members resign or become inactive. This plan would include guidelines for interim appointments and a streamlined process for replacing members to minimize disruptions.
6. Promote Board Opportunities — Increase public awareness about board positions through outreach efforts, including community events, social media campaigns, and partnerships with local organizations. Encouraging broader participation will help bring diverse perspectives to the boards.

By focusing on these strategies, I aim to ensure that DeKalb County’s advisory and oversight boards operate effectively and remain representative of the community’s needs.

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?

Jacqueline Adams – District 7

I support annexations that create logical boundaries and improve service delivery, but they must be resident-focused and not driven solely by a city’s desire to expand its tax base. I will advocate for a transparent annexation process that includes resident participation, ensuring annexations benefit the communities involved and respect their needs.

Kenneth Chung Royal – District 7

Annexation should only be pursued if it truly benefits the residents. I support a case-by-case approach where annexation is transparent and based on thorough community input. Residents must have a say in the process, and we need to ensure that any annexation does not disproportionately burden those in unincorporated areas.

Dr. Ladena Bolton – District 7

I would have to evaluate each proposed annexation separately in order to determine the impacts that it would have on the city and surrounding unincorporated areas. However, in general, I am not in favor of annexations that seek to take revenue generated by commercial properties from the unincorporated areas, in order to re-distribute them to the cities. There has to be a balance so that the unincorporated areas can continue to provide the highest level of services to our residents and in some capacities to the corresponding cities as well.

Demetrius McCoy – District 7

While I understand, the impact that annexations can have on the county operations, I am always supportive of residents having the right to vote concerning their desire to be annexed into a city.

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?

Jacqueline Adams – District 7

I believe we should first focus on improving DeKalb County's service delivery before pursuing new city formations. By enhancing management, streamlining operations, and investing in better customer service, we can address existing service gaps. However, if communities strongly feel cityhood is their best option, I support their right to pursue it through an inclusive, transparent process.

Kenneth Chung Royal – District 7

The creation of new cities needs to be carefully evaluated. While local governance can have benefits, we must assess whether it will improve services and reduce the tax burden on residents. I believe in a balanced approach that ensures community needs are met without creating additional bureaucratic complexity.

Dr. Ladena Bolton – District 7

I would have to evaluate each proposed creation separately in order to determine the impacts that it would have on the city and surrounding unincorporated areas. However, in general, I am not in favor of new cities that seek to take revenue generated by commercial properties from the unincorporated areas, in order to re-distribute them to the new cities. There has to be a balance so that the unincorporated areas can continue to provide the highest level of services to our residents and in some capacities to the corresponding cities as well.

Demetrius McCoy – District 7

Similar to my answer, the formal question I am always supportive of residence having the right to vote. I do not believe that anyone should ever be denied the right to vote on a particular issue.

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?

Jacqueline Adams – District 7

Yes, I fully support adopting OpenGov to enhance transparency and accountability in DeKalb County. The platform will provide clear, accessible financial and operational data, building trust between the government and residents. However, I will ensure that the platform is properly utilized, with full integration and oversight to maximize its benefits.

Kenneth Chung Royal – District 7

I would support adopting OpenGov or a similar platform because transparency is key to maintaining public trust. Such platforms provide residents with access to government financial data and performance metrics in real time, which is crucial for accountability. A tool like this would allow citizens to see exactly how their tax dollars are being used and ensure that government operations remain transparent.

Dr. Ladena Bolton – District 7

I support improving accountability and transparency to constituents. However, I would have to do more research on this platform to determine its suitability for DeKalb. As a former US Army Civilian Forensic Chemist who has secret security clearance, I have some concerns regarding the platform using cloud software. The county would need to implement security processes and training to ensure that all employees or users are equipped to manage the information that is shared on the platform in order to keep resident and county information safe.

Demetrius McCoy – District 7

Yes, I fully support adopting OpenGov or a similar platform in DeKalb County to enhance governmental accountability and transparency. Here's why:

1. Increased Transparency — OpenGov allows residents to access clear, detailed information about how their tax dollars are being spent, which is crucial for building trust between the government and its citizens. I believe that people have the right to know where public funds are going and how decisions are being made. This platform would make that information easily accessible in real time.
2. Enhanced Accountability — With OpenGov, not only can residents see the county's budget and spending, but they can also track progress on key projects and services. This level of accountability encourages more responsible financial management and ensures that public officials are held to higher standards in delivering results.
3. Engagement and Collaboration — Platforms like OpenGov create opportunities for greater public engagement. Residents can ask questions, provide feedback, and stay informed about initiatives that impact their community. This two-way communication can strengthen relationships between the county and its residents, making local government more responsive to their needs.

4. Better Decision-Making — OpenGov provides tools for data analysis and performance tracking, which can help county officials make more informed decisions. By understanding trends in spending and service delivery, we can allocate resources more efficiently and prioritize the areas where they're needed most.

In a county as large and diverse as DeKalb, it's important that we use every available tool to make our government more transparent, accountable, and effective. OpenGov offers a modern, user-friendly solution that would help us meet these goals, and I would strongly support its adoption or a similar platform to keep our citizens informed and engaged.

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?

Jacqueline Adams – District 7

I do not support making the Charter Review Commission a permanent body. Instead, a structured review every 6 to 10 years would be more effective, allowing for necessary reforms without the constant pressure of ongoing review, which could lead to politicization or unnecessary changes.

Kenneth Chung Royal – District 7

Section 8: Compensation

Current Issue: The compensation of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Commissioners is tied to the salary levels from 1991. Given the significant increase in cost of living and the evolving responsibilities of these roles, it's important to update compensation to be more aligned with modern realities.

Proposed Revision: Implement Periodic Reviews: The salaries of the Chief Executive and Commissioners should be reviewed every 5 to 10 years, with adjustments based on inflation, cost of living, and market rates for comparable positions. Performance-Based Adjustments: Consider incorporating performance-based metrics into the compensation structure. For example, Commissioners and the CEO could be eligible for bonuses or salary increases based on meeting specific benchmarks such as community satisfaction, budgetary management, or economic development milestones.

Section 13: Powers and Duties of the Chief Executive

Current Issue: The Chief Executive has exclusive control over the administration of county government, which can limit the role of the Board of Commissioners (BOC) in day-to-day governance and decision-making. A more collaborative structure would promote transparency and balance.

Proposed Revision: Create a Collaborative Executive Council: Establish an Executive Advisory Council made up of representatives from the Board of Commissioners to provide input on major administrative decisions. While the CEO would still have final decision-making power, this council would ensure that the BOC is consulted on important matters. Shared Authority for Department Heads: Rather than having the CEO appoint department

heads exclusively, the Board of Commissioners should also have a role in confirming these appointments to ensure broader accountability.

Section 15: Veto Power of the Chief Executive

Current Issue: The current veto power granted to the CEO allows them to block ordinances or resolutions passed by the BOC, giving the CEO significant authority over policy decisions. While the BOC can override the veto with a two-thirds vote, reducing the frequency of vetoes or implementing stricter guidelines could promote greater collaboration.

Proposed Revision: Limited Use of Veto Power: Limit the use of veto power to certain categories, such as fiscal or emergency matters, rather than allowing the CEO to veto any ordinance or resolution. **Mandatory Mediation Before Veto:** Before a veto is issued, the CEO and the Board of Commissioners should be required to participate in a mediation process to resolve disagreements and seek a compromise. If mediation fails, then the veto could be enacted.

Dr. Ladena Bolton – District 7

There are some recommendations that are only incremental in nature and will not address overall concerns. However, after 40 years, a slow and steady approach to get the county on the right track is a reasonable approach. Especially considering that the frequency for which the organizational act should be reviewed has been recommended at a consistent frequency of 8 years. If I had to choose one recommendation that might be contentious, it could be the subpoena power for commissioners. While it aims to enhance accountability, it could also lead to potential conflicts between the Board of Commissioners and county officials, possibly complicating governance.

Demetrius McCoy – District 7

I support most of the recommendations made by the Charter Review Commission, as they aim to modernize and improve DeKalb County's governance structure. However, I would not support the recommendation to grant the Board of Commissioners subpoena power. While oversight is important, I believe this authority could impede the efficient functioning of the government, potentially leading to unnecessary disruptions and conflicts that slow down progress. We already have mechanisms in place to ensure transparency and accountability, and I believe those can be strengthened without compromising the operational efficiency of the county.

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?

Jacqueline Adams – District 7

Yes, I fully support the creation of citizen engagement groups. Enhancing direct dialogue between residents and the Board of Commissioners will build trust, improve decision-making, and ensure that government actions align with community needs and priorities. This approach empowers residents to actively participate in shaping their neighborhoods and fosters a more united DeKalb County.

Kenneth Chung Royal – District 7

Yes, I fully support this recommendation. Encouraging “bottom-up” communication fosters trust between the community and local government. It allows residents to voice their concerns, particularly in areas like planning and zoning, where decisions directly impact neighborhoods. Engaging citizens in dialogue will help ensure that policies reflect the true needs of the people.

Dr. Ladena Bolton – District 7

I would support the development of citizen engagement groups. These groups can play a crucial role in fostering more inclusive and transparent governance. By involving residents in discussions about planning, zoning, and other issues, the Board of Commissioners can make more informed decisions that reflect the community’s priorities and values. Regular and meaningful engagement can build trust between the government and the community. These groups can facilitate collaboration between different departments and the community, helping to address complex issues more effectively.

Demetrius McCoy – District 7

Yes, I support the development of citizen engagement groups because they align with my priorities of improving service delivery, fostering safe communities, and investing in infrastructure. These groups would ensure residents' voices are heard on key issues like planning, zoning, and public safety, leading to more informed and responsive decision-making. By promoting direct input from neighborhoods, we can address concerns more effectively across multiple departments, making government more transparent, accountable, and connected to the people it serves.