



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

2019 Voter Guide

Christiansburg Town Council (3 seats on ballot)



Samuel Bishop

Samuel M. Bishop - Christiansburg has always been my home. I served 21 years in the military. Activate and reserves [retired sergeant first class]. I served 36 years in law enforcement and retired as a captain. I am a life member of Christiansburg Rescue. I am a member of Asbury United Methodist Church. In 2014, I was appointed to Christiansburg Town Council. In 2015, I was elected to Town Council. I have a BS degree in management of human resources.



Harry Collins

Harry Collins is a fiscal conservative. A few of his accomplishments are: he initiated the silent prayer before every meeting called the Moment of Reflection; he initiated the demolition program to tear down dilapidated housing; he is committee chairman for the PPEA for the proposed Town Park; and he helped write the Code for Council communicating with the town attorneys.



Johana Hicks

Johana Hicks has been a local town resident for over 18 years and a business owner. She prides herself on local town businesses with the emphasis on helping people. She always puts an effort into doing things right and working for the best of people.

I believe that small business makes a huge impact in our communities. I want to bring my experiences of business, money management, and love for the community to help with the ability for growth for all town businesses, small and large. I want to make our town safe and prosperous. At the same time, I'm bringing a fair mind for treatment of all businesses.



Deveron Milne

Deveron Milne is a 1986 graduate of West Virginia University with a B.S. in Business Administration (Marketing). He developed a professional career in Information Technology while serving the community in a volunteer capacity as a pre-hospital emergency healthcare provider (12-year paramedic for Christiansburg Rescue). Milne and his wife, Lynn Baluh, have lived in their Christiansburg home for the past 19 years. Milne lived in Blacksburg for the 13 years prior.



Henry Showalter

Henry D. Showalter - I am a native of Christiansburg and raised my family here. I'm a lifelong member of the Christiansburg Presbyterian Church, work in finance and honorably served in the Army Reserves. In addition to serving on Town Council, I volunteer as a coach for the Christiansburg Soccer Club and Junior Achievement - the largest nonprofit youth economic education organization in the world.

Christiansburg Council Candidate Replies

Samuel Bishop

What is your #1 priority for Christiansburg and what is your plan to address it if elected?

I would like to continue working on improving the looks on the older buildings in the community as well as unkempt properties. I would work closely with the Central Business Committee. I would reach out to building and property owners to encourage them to work on improving the looks of their property as well as apply for any grants offered by the town. I would listen and talk with people in the community about their concerns.

Harry Collins

My #1 Priority for Christiansburg is managing the town in a conservative manner so we will NOT have to raise real estate or personal property taxes. There are many challenges ahead such as the infrastructure, new or improved roads, and the town's proposed park, but careful and smart money management will allow us to be progressive without having to break the bank! Christiansburg is in a great financial situation at the present time, and I plan on keeping it that way!

Christiansburg has seen a boom in residential and commercial development. How will you work to assure orderly and well-planned growth to preserve the town's quality of life?

There is not a 100% way to assure orderly and well-planned growth. I feel the best thing I could do is listen to both sides as I have always done. I know as Town Council, we cannot please everyone. When I vote on an item I do what I feel is best for the community. The biggest thing I can do is listen to others' concerns.

A boom in residential and commercial development is a great thing if you have planned well for your town. My vision for Christiansburg is simple: I care about Christiansburg and the people who live here. I want to help make Christiansburg a leader so other towns and cities will say - "Let's do it like Christiansburg!" This has already started happening. Having helped write the town's comprehensive plan has given me great insight into the planning for future years. This Plan creates a vision for the next 20 to 30 years! Christiansburg has planned well, and new sewer lines, new storm water lines, and new water lines are being installed at the present time. Christiansburg has many projects being undertaken at this time. Some people are complaining about the road construction and the like, but these infrastructure lines are being installed because they are very old and need attention now! In planning for these upgrades, the Town applied for and obtained grants to pay for a lot of these improvements. For instance, the town received four bids for the North Franklin Corridor Improvements and the winning bid was \$8.5 million. The total budget from Smartscale Funding from VDOT covers nearly the entire project. The Town's portion is only \$12,968.

Johana Hicks

Help improve the town budget. Fiscal responsibility joined with good stewardship to save money and not overspend. We cannot continue to operate this way for the long-term health of the town. The priority for Christiansburg is to become a community of entrepreneurs to restart the tradition of Christiansburg. It is time to restructure the town's finances to allow the residents and businesses to thrive. Make better use of the town's assets to promote a local culture of community.

Working with special committees and groups to put in checks and balances for proper planning plus assure orderly growth. The boom in residential development has led to a strain on the budget. There must be controls to not force and make up costs elsewhere, and residential services need to be aligned to those who use them. Planned growth is a must and cost of town services need to be considered.

Deveron Milne

To commit the town's limited resources (financial and otherwise) in the most appropriate manner. To ensure well thought through actions consistent with our long-term planning. Christiansburg residents enjoy quiet, safe, close-knit communities and neighborhoods with access to natural surroundings, healthcare, and employment opportunities. We need to take small steps toward a creative solution to preserve the positive overall image of Christiansburg. One way is to encourage increased responsibility for upkeep and maintenance of privately-owned property.

We need to continue to promote development of under-utilized properties in town. But in doing so, we must also understand the increased demand this creates for town services and supporting roads. Christiansburg has a long history of approving conditional use permits for activities reaching beyond the original zoning. Fortunately, the Planning Commission provides the venue for thorough review to ensure a well-informed decision by town council.

Henry Showalter

Keeping the citizens informed, town hall transparent, and continuing to open lines of communication between residents and council/staff. We have come a long way with opening up government since my first election. Back then, and not so long ago, the town had no true Web presence. If someone wanted to know what was going on within the town, they had to go to Town Hall. Now, we have an informative and interactive Web page, advanced media technology in our facilities, a social media presence, and much more. If anyone wants information or to input their opinion, there are multiple convenient instruments available to them, but we must stay diligent to continue to evolve making it easier for our citizens to get information and contribute theirs.

I believe our town is on the threshold of another population increase, which could feed a high-density housing surge. Our current residential codes can sustain this with some tweaking, but I am concerned about commercial sprawl. We all witnessed the emptying of large commercial buildings, such as Market Place and Kmart, which were most likely due to online shopping. Though each of these sites has recently changed ownership and is being revitalized through that ownership, online shopping will not go away. We can look into shifting away from true outdoor retail malls by encouraging a more *mixed use* development for our undeveloped commercial properties. Note that Town Council and staff have been proactive with large commercial revitalization by allowing easier and safer access to several large business centers such as the Market Place and Gateway Plaza.

Christiansburg Town Council Candidate Replies Continued

Samuel Bishop

How do you balance the wishes of town residents who expect a high level of public services with concerns about the cost for those improved services?

First of all, I would be open-minded and listen to concerns of the community. I would look into the cost of the services. If possible, I would like for the town to get bids on the service which they did not provide. I feel it's very important to get feedback from everyone. After getting feedback, I would make the choice that I feel best meets the needs of the community.

Harry Collins

Citizens of Christiansburg should and do expect a high level of public services. This is what makes Christiansburg a great place to live! It's Town Council's job to ensure the Town provides these services at a reasonable cost, not a cost that burdens the citizens. This process starts with the development of the fiscal year budget. The budget for Fiscal Year 2019-2020 is \$60,533,389. The budget process begins with each department submitting their funding requests for their operations, as well as equipment, vehicle needs and major capital projects. This budget was approved by Town Council on June 25, 2019, ONLY AFTER Town Council had sent it back twice for reductions. A prime example of the citizens wanting a public service and Town Council reacting is recycling. The town just finished its first year providing curbside recycling collection. Over this past year, this service has doubled the tonnage of recycling collected by the Town and decreased solid waste by 300 tons.

Housing affordability is a growing concern in our area. What can the Town Council do to assure that families can afford to live in Christiansburg?

One of the first things to do is get the average cost of living in Christiansburg and then get information on the average income of families wishing to live in Christiansburg. This could be done by working with real estate agents or other organizations who work with families looking for housing. The town could work with developers to try to get them to have some apartments or homes that would meet the needs of different income levels.

One of the ways to ensure families can afford to live in Christiansburg, as mentioned in Question # 1, is NOT to raise the real estate or personal property taxes. Since I have been on Town Council, we have NOT raised these taxes at all. I want to keep it that way! I am a fiscal conservative and stress the "Save a Buck" mentality in all of my thinking. To take this one step further, I plan on proposing a rate freeze on real estate and personal property taxes for people 65 years of age and older.

Johana Hicks

Strategic planning to not overspend the budget. Conservative responsibility to not waste money. Tax dollars to stay within our local community. Provide as many services as possible within a balanced budget.

Really, this is not in the realm of the Town Council's control. Real estate values and costs of construction are the issue. The town could, however, lessen the burden through the elimination of redundant costs in building codes, costs of water retention and the said rules and other area of construction. Keep taxes within conservative and affordable range.

Deveron Milne

Good stewardship of public monies is the underlying expectation of any government. A flexible procurement approach where the project demands are adjusted to provide cost containment may help in some cases. We all need to appreciate that long-term investment in infrastructure doesn't always come with immediate results and doesn't happen overnight. For example: the introduction of uniform garbage bins throughout town was not welcomed by all, but thanks to a lot of research and planning by the town, ultimately resulted in a reduction of exposure to work-related hazards for employees. Identification of opportunities for consumption-based billing (e.g.: household recycling) allows new services to be introduced with minimal cost to the town.

Christiansburg has become home to those working in Blacksburg, Radford, and Roanoke. Families wanting to live in Christiansburg are finding the available supply is quickly consumed with some properties selling within a day or two of listing. So long as the town remains an attractive place to live then we are only going to see a continued increase in demand, which ultimately leads to increased prices. Given Christiansburg's limited remaining land available for development, the only way to increasing housing supply is to build vertically. I'm not so sure Christiansburg is ready for high-rise housing complexes.

Henry Showalter

Christiansburg has always provided quality services at a reasonable price to our residents. Several good examples are the most recent water authority improvement, as well as the implementation of curbside recycling. We [Council] discussed, at length, an annual tier adjustment to the water utility rate instead of an *all-at-once* increase to assist our residents. Plus, we review our services and cost regularly. The curbside recycling program was a huge success with our citizens. Though it took some time to implement, we were able to start the program for all residential trash participants at a reasonable monthly rate. Our recyclables have exceeded expectations, which decreases solid waste in our regional landfill.

Christiansburg has always provided affordable housing to new and existing homebuyers along with a strong diverse rental base. Our town has a variety of housing options for new homebuyers, young professionals, families and seniors. I will continue to support this. Though we cannot direct federal and state building codes directly, through staff we can continue to work with contractors and homeowners so their projects meet those safety guidelines, which protect and increase our resident's quality of life.



Mongtomery County School Board District F



Sue Kass

Susan J. “Sue” Kass: I’ve lived in Stroubles Mill with my husband and two college-aged daughters for 15 years. Originally from New Jersey, I graduated from Rutgers University with a degree in Business Administration. After working as a human resources manager for 14 years, I taught at Blacksburg Middle School from 2006-2017. I now work in Student Services at Virginia Tech Graduate School.



Sofia Midkiff

Sofia Zhang Midkiff serves on the Montgomery County Public Schools Gifted Advisory Committee, Blacksburg Chinese School Board, and Haymarket Square HOA Board. Previous experience includes: Virginia Tech adjunct faculty for Strategy at Virginia Tech’s Pamplin School of Business; business consultant at IBM; marketing manager at Eriksson; and analyst contractor for the U.S. Department of Treasury. Sofia graduated from Stockholm University and Emory University.

School Board Candidate Replies

What is your #1 priority for education in the Montgomery County school system, and if elected what is your plan to address it?

Susan Kass

The number one priority for education in our school system is providing our students with a safe, comfortable, and positive learning environment in which all students are treated equally, respected for their differences, and given the opportunity to be successful in whatever career path they may choose. In order to facilitate that broad concept, I would focus on the following: Greater focus on the whole child – Students need to develop academic, social and emotional skills. It is important to recognize differences in interests and abilities and provide curriculum that gives our students a well-balanced educational experience. AP and Dual education classes should continue, but there should also be an added emphasis on trade and CTE classes, recognizing that not all students must go to college to have a successful career. Our students should leave high school prepared to be independent adults. They should be provided not only with academic skills but life skills, that will assist them in becoming good citizens of whatever community they choose. While technology is a useful learning tool, we must create more of a balance in the classroom of computer-driven learning with hands-on and physical activity—at all grades. The current trend towards leveling in the classroom is one that should be carefully considered. Leveling at a young age can keep a

Sofia Midkiff

Stable funding is my #1 priority for education in MCPS. If elected, I want to look into a revenue-sharing model that has been used in Salem and, also, establish a rainy-day fund. Long-term school budget planning is needed.

child from developing the necessary social and emotional skills they will need in the future. Inclusion allows students to interact with those of different backgrounds and ability and helps to develop empathy towards others.

Supporting teachers—The county is losing some of its best teachers to early retirement and other positions outside the school system because of the pressures of teaching, increased workloads, lack of advancement, and lack of monetary reward. We must find a way to fund teacher salaries and bring them to a level at least equal to the state average. In addition, we need to recognize the personal sacrifices made by teachers during the school year and provide a way for them to balance their work and personal lives. Adding additional administrative tasks to an already overloaded class load causes stress, and many of our teachers are feeling these pressures. Recruiting new teachers is becoming difficult, and in order to recruit quality teachers we need to provide a quality salary package and work environment.

Community involvement and consistent, clear communication on School Board decisions—It is important that we allow input from teachers, parents, and students on policy and program issues. I plan to spend a great deal of time on a regular basis meeting with all parties, understanding their concerns, gathering their ideas, and making decisions based on this input. Even more important is the clear communication of changes and decisions, providing concrete reasons for why a decision is made. Lack of communication leads to rumors, conflict and loss of confidence in our administrators.

Gov. Ralph Northam has challenged high schools to register at least 65 percent of their senior class to vote. What will you do to increase the percentage of our high school seniors registered to vote?

Students begin learning about the importance of voting in 8th grade Civics and again in U.S. Government during senior year high school level. I'd like to see more programs for other grades within middle and high school that educate students on their civic responsibilities and help them to see first-hand how our local government operates. I would like to bring speakers into the classroom who represent local government, conduct live debates during election periods, and support the formation of school clubs that focus on civic and political activism. Registration events within the schools, with the assistance of student organizations, should be held several times throughout the year. The School Board could sponsor a contest among schools for best registration percentages. Students should be given the opportunity to vote during school hours if they are registered voters. Educating students on the importance of voting and why voting matters in a way that young people can relate to should be encouraged. Organizations like RocktheVote are targeted to younger voters and should be used to educate civic responsibility and persuade students to become more involved.

Hold a "Registration Day" at MCPS high schools. Find a day in the beginning of the school year and call it "Registration Day." Have registration forms available at the front desk and other places in the school. Teachers can remind students to register when in class. Invite people in the voter registration office to come and speak to the students. Once students find out that there is so much work behind the election, they will have more respect for the whole process, thereby creating more interest in participating

Susan Kass

What can be done in diversity staff training to encourage minority students to feel more involved and recognized in their classroom? Would creating an outreach program for their parents' involvement help them be pro-active in their child's schooling?

To me, diversity is not only promoting awareness in regards to race and ethnicity, but also socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, religion and able-bodiedness. I believe it is important to give a voice to any student who feels marginalized and it starts with recognizing what are the differences in their experiences. Training should include awareness of and acknowledgment of these differences. But it needs to be training that is relevant to the classroom and can help teachers create a climate in their classroom that is open to diversity. Creating a climate of openness in the classroom, celebrating differences, teaching curriculum that exposes students to diverse cultures, and involving parents are all ways to help students to understand and value diversity. It is important to have open and honest conversation with students in the classroom and give them the tools to better understand and appreciate these differences in their peers. Teaching curriculum that is inclusive of these various differences will help students learn about others' experiences. Reaching out to families and inviting them into the classroom to share information about themselves would help students - and the families - to create a greater understanding of their lives. Introducing into the classroom parents and other community members who represent diverse cultures, experiences, and identities will help bring reality to the challenges of, and appreciation for, living in a diverse world. I would suggest a staff member for each school whose primary responsibility is to coordinate parent involvement and work with the community to provide such programs.

What are your thoughts on expanding student support services in the schools, particularly for mental health issues?

I have been a strong supporter of expanding mental health support services for students. There is such great pressure on our students today and they often feel alone in their journey. These pressures can start at a young age, with an elementary school child who has difficulties at home and sometimes doesn't get the basics that many of us take for granted - three meals, heat, decent clothing. Or they may be from a different culture and don't feel like they fit in. As they move on to middle school, they are now being bombarded by social media and the need to live up to what they believe is the life they are expected to lead. Friendships start to change, grades start to become more important, pressure from home starts to build, and hormones are kicking in. Soon they are on to high school where complex relationships, pressure to decide upon a career, temptations of drugs and alcohol, and the continued social media hype that leaves them feeling inadequate are creating anxiety and stress.

Our world has become a very complicated place to live, even for adults. We have to give our young people support in managing all of these pressures I mentioned, as well as others I have not touched upon such as school safety, gender identity, and body consciousness. Encouraging student groups, such as the MCPS Students for Mental Health Awareness, that are teaching students and adults what is important today should continue and be encouraged.

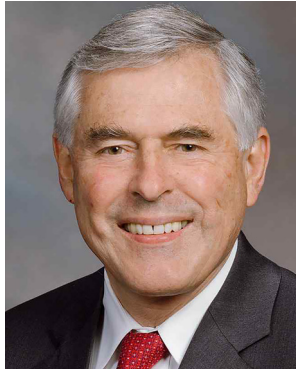
Sofia Midkiff

I would support a training program, to include:
Invite minority students and parents for discussions to better understand issues from their perspective.
Research project: Assign every participant to one country that MCPS students represent. The final presentation should include the country's geography, history, cultural do's and do-not's, etc. Present it to the whole class at the end of the training.
Send out surveys to all families and ask them what is missing from diversity and inclusion in MCPS that should be addressed.
Outreach program, to include:
Regular meetings between MCPS and minority groups
Reach out to minority groups and ask if they can send invitations to MCPS for major events throughout the year, so MCPS can help promote and participate in these events.
Ask minority groups to propose and help organizing culture related activities at schools.

This is definitely needed.
Having regular sessions with students to educate the students.
Establish support groups for students who might have mental health issues. Participation would be voluntary. and all group information must be confidential.
Take a holistic approach. Remind parents and students to ensure proper nutrition (and work with those where that is a challenge), to get plenty of exercise, and to sleep enough. Possibly increase outdoor activities for students who do not participate any athletic team/club in middle schools and high schools. Also, educate students on the downsides of too much "screen time" and how to manage social media.

Virginia Senate

District 21



John Edwards

As a U.S. Marine, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Virginia, vice mayor of Roanoke and now as senator for the 21st District, John Edwards has dedicated his life to public service. Senator Edwards was born in Roanoke, attended Princeton and UVA law, and is a champion for public schools, higher education, improved transportation, healthcare and creating good paying jobs.

Improvement of I-81 is a top priority. As a member of the I-81 Committee, established by the funding legislation this spring, I will continue to promote urgently needed improvements to I-81. Also, I will continue to work to extend Amtrak to the New River Valley; this has been a priority of mine since I worked hard to bring Amtrak to Roanoke in 2017.

I support early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, and same-day registration, among other reforms. I oppose requirements such as having to produce a voter ID and other voter suppression barriers. The Governor's package of election reforms I also support.

While I voted for the final version of Senate Joint Resolution 306, I continue to have reservations. These reservations include: that the proposed Constitutional Amendment to establish a Commission is impractical; any redistricting plan adopted by the Commission cannot be amended by the General Assembly; and if the General Assembly rejects the Commission's plan, redistricting defaults to the Virginia Supreme Court, which is not democratically representative of Virginia. I did support amendments that were adopted, such as the Commission having open meetings and all records being open and transparent. I also supported the proposed amendment to prevent partisan redistricting, but that important amendment was not adopted.

My bill to create voluntary background checks at gun shows passed in 2016. With the Virginia State Police now present at all gun shows, we can and should make background checks at gun shows mandatory. I also support local governments having authority to ban guns in local government buildings, and I have introduced similar legislation for Roanoke City. I support banning assault weapons in Virginia.

Steven Nelson: BA in Public Adm. (city county manager) Minor Econ from Appalachian State University. Went to Harvard University at night part time while working studying Business Adm. and Economics.

Primary care-giver (2012-13) for my father until his passing and now primary care-giver for my 91-year old mother.

My goal is to make sure we get our fair share of fed money for I-81 and fixing 220S aka Future 73..that will be built in 2037 at \$3.2B. Make Gov't more efficient and reduce regulations.

Steven Nelson sent biographical information.

What do you believe is the top priority for your district, and what is your plan to address it?

What measures, if any, would you support to ensure the right to vote and election integrity?

Regarding fair redistricting, (1) Do you support the proposal for a Virginia Redistricting Commission and why? (2) If the Constitutional Amendment is adopted, what legislation would you support to implement the Commission?

What solutions would you support to reduce the current level of gun violence in Virginia?

District 19



Flourette "Flo" Ketner

A wife and mother of three young children, Flo Ketner has lived in the New River Valley for over 30 years. She grew up in Floyd and graduated from Floyd County High School and Radford University with a B.S. in English. Currently, she lives in Christiansburg and serves on the board of the new non-profit organization Cayambis Institute Of Latin American Studies in Music. Raised by her disabled grandmother in poverty, her mother lost her painful battle with drug abuse and this experience shaped her future. These years led her to a life of volunteering for her community and individuals in need. She has been a full-time volunteer for the Jessie-Peterman Memorial Branch Library in Floyd from when she was 9 until she was 18. She volunteered while she was in college and helps members of her community with transportation for medical care and simple things like hooking up a new computer. Currently, she is the volunteer for the LEGO Club at her children's elementary

David Suetterlein did not reply to the League

What do you believe is the top priority for your district, and what is your plan to address it?

Raising the minimum wage to a livable wage. We need to raise it to \$10 with an automatic inflation trigger going forward. This is the strongest path towards a stronger economy, better schools, better property values, and more revenue in our local communities. I will work with my fellow senators and put this legislation on the floor as quickly as possible and push to pass it immediately.

What measures, if any, would you support to ensure the right to vote and election integrity?

I support having automatic registration. I will vote for no excuse absentee voting.

Regarding fair redistricting, (1) Do you support the proposal for a Virginia Redistricting Commission and why? (2) If the Constitutional Amendment is adopted, what legislation would you support to implement the Commission?

I support a Virginia Redistricting Commission because the General Assembly members should not be choosing their own districts. I would also like to implement that we choose our commission based on differing appointing legislator to do our best to avoid a potential bias.

What solutions would you support to reduce the current level of gun violence in Virginia?

We need Red Flag Laws, High Capacity Round Ban, No Reciprocity, Required Background Checks and no Private Sale Loopholes. I would also like to ban Assault weapons.

Virginia House of Delegates Candidates

District 7



Rhonda Seltz

Rhonda Seltz is a native of Pulaski County and has lived in Riner for the past 18 years. She paid her way through college at Virginia Tech and through graduate school at California State University. Rhonda is a long-time advocate with 37 years of experience in health and human services and has helped thousands gain access to healthcare.

Nick Rush did not reply to the League

District 8

Darlene Lewis

Joe McNamara did not reply to the League

I am a 20-year resident of Roanoke County and a small business owner. With several goals in mind and a heartfelt of compassion for the residents of the 8th district. I will work to bring to pass: A Healthy Community is one which embodies the people as a whole. To have a healthy community for everyone. To create opportunity for all. We need to see each other as neighbors. A healthy community is one that offers complete well-being to all its resident of all stages of life. A healthy community helps to reduce health gaps caused by differences in income and education.

I will work to revitalize our small-town economy by recycling back into the community. That will provide local jobs and keep the wealth in the community. Build schools without raising taxes. Bring a balance to the community. We can bring about equality diversity and respect for life.

On a more personal note It is our moral responsibility to bring the cost of prescription drug prices down by eliminating price gouging on brand name drugs and capping co-pays on insulin. This is something dear to me in that a few months ago my husband had a toe amputated. We realize how important capping co-pays was on insulin. We spent hours looking for different brands that were affordable for us.

District 12 *Chris Hurst*



Chris Hurst

Chris L. Hurst is the Delegate for the 12th District in the Virginia House of Delegates, representing parts of Montgomery and Pulaski Counties and all of Giles County and the City of Radford. He was elected in November of 2017 to a two-year term and currently serves on the House Education and Science and Technology Committees. In 2018, he was selected to serve on the House Democratic Caucus Campaign Committee and as Communication Chair.

He fights for all Virginians, including championing policies to increase teacher salaries and pass redistricting reform. During the 2019 legislative session, he passed nine bills including measures to address college affordability, increasing economic development for Southwest Virginia, and ensuring access for people with disabilities. Prior to serving as Delegate, Chris was evening anchor of WDBJ7 for six years, telling the stories of people in southwest Virginia. During that time he reported on mental health and criminal justice, which are now some of his top legislative priorities.

Forest Hite



T. Forest Hite

Born into a military family, Forrest Hite lived all across our great country before settling in Radford nine years ago. He and his wife Tati-ana, a police officer, love calling the NRV home and plan to raise their family right here. Forrest works for a Christian non-profit in Fairlawn and is committed to representing the people of the NRV well.

Priority: In addition to bringing back common sense amidst the recent chaos of Richmond and cultivating a healthy business climate here at home, education is a key issue for Forrest in this election. Having talked with many parents and teachers across the district, he agrees that education must be a top priority for our delegate. We must ensure that our schools get the funding they need here in the NRV and don't get left behind compared to Northern Virginia and other places in the Commonwealth. We also must take care of our teachers, increasing teacher pay at least to the national average over the next four years and giving our expert educators more freedom in the classroom.

Virginia House of Delegates

District 7 *Rhonda Seltz*

What do you believe is the top priority for your district, and what is your plan to address it?

I believe that access to affordable healthcare is the main priority for my district, the state of Virginia and our country. We cannot wait for change at the federal level and must act now to improve healthcare access at the state level by creating a state-based marketplace exchange. Those states that have implemented state versus federal exchanges have up to 22 percent lower-priced insurance policies and more options for coverage. The need for dental, mental health and addiction services is especially critical to ensure that we have a healthy labor force so we can attract new businesses and build a stronger economy. Current Affordable Care Act federal marketplace policies and Medicaid programs include mental health and addiction services and have limited dental coverage. I will ensure that state marketplace plans also include these specialty services and will advocate for expanded dental services for adults through state-based marketplace plans and through Virginia's Expanded Medicaid program.

What measures, if any, would you support to ensure the right to vote and election integrity?

I will support paper ballots and making risk-limiting audits a nonpartisan part of standard election procedure. Using random sampling allows audits to be cheaper and faster. I do not support on-line voting or voting through text due to documented dangers of threats from hackers, including those from foreign nations.

Regarding fair redistricting, (1) Do you support the proposal for a Virginia Redistricting Commission and why? (2) If the Constitutional Amendment is adopted, what legislation would you support to implement the Commission?

I support the proposal for the Virginia Redistricting Commission and feel that it is long overdue. Gerrymandering has occurred on both sides of the aisle and it is time to draw maps that serve the voters' interests instead of party interests. I would support legislation that includes women and minority members and offers a reasonable and fair selection process.

What solutions would you support to reduce the current level of gun violence in Virginia?

I support commonsense gun laws that will protect our Second Amendment rights. Like most Americans, I also support universal background checks. Individuals convicted of domestic violence and other violent crimes should not be allowed to have guns. Gun owners should be provided education and incentives to keep guns and ammunition away from children, teens or adults struggling with depression or anger issues. Careless and irresponsible gun owners should be prosecuted. When a mass shooting occurs, the shooter's name should not be made public and every effort should be made to deny the shooter recognition of any kind, especially through the media, including social media. We cannot just deal with gun regulations to address gun violence. We must also address social and economic factors including poverty, education, housing and livable wages. When people feel helpless and when they feel they have no options, they become desperate, they give up and do desperate things.

District 8
Darlene Lewis

Broadband – I propose a committee to begin working on grants to help build the last mile broadband project. Help the State realize the benefits to bringing broadband to promote business.

A copy made of every ballot before it is put into machine. Every ballot matched at the end of election.

Only on extremely large districts that are especially rural; more delegates – senators. We should have more areas with two to three, in smaller condensed areas.

I believe if we began by just asking businesses or places where there is a private gathering to change their rules and just not allow guns in. That will start a move towards change.

Virginia House of Delegates District 12 Replies

Chris Hurst

What do you believe is the top priority for your district, and what is your plan to address it?

As I continue to speak with and listen to people throughout the 12th District some common priorities come to the forefront, all concerning the growth of the New River Valley. Montgomery County for example is expected to add thousands of new residents in the next two decades. We need to prepare for this growth by continuing to advocate for increased broadband connectivity and bandwidth power. I was proud to vote for a budget that added more funds for this effort and this year, the NRV has received hundreds of thousands of additional state dollars to provide quality internet access. But as essential as that infrastructure work is, we must advance other basic services to ensure our growth isn't stifled; namely new units of affordable housing, resources to renovate and build new schools as well as increase direct aid to our school divisions and continue transportation improvements like delivering Amtrak service to Christiansburg. We need regional cooperation and advocates in Richmond to make this a reality and I am proud to be a strong voice for the New River Valley in the General Assembly.

What measures, if any, would you support to ensure the right to vote and election integrity?

I support all measures to ensure the right to vote and don't prevent any marginalized groups from being able to exercise their rights at the ballot box. Virginians need several voting rights laws to fulfill that promise including, but not limited to, automatic voter registration no-excuse absentee balloting, expanded early voting, same-day registration and the repeal of Virginia's voter ID law.

Regarding fair redistricting, (1) Do you support the proposal for a Virginia Redistricting Commission and why? (2) If the Constitutional Amendment is adopted, what legislation would you support to implement the Commission?

While I still very much prefer an independent redistricting commission, I support the bipartisan commission put forth in the proposal that will be back for the General Assembly next year for approval before it goes to voters in November, 2020. The major fight will continue to be over the criteria with which the commission draws our legislative districts. That criteria must include stipulations that partisan data and efforts to favor one party or another are prohibited.

What solutions would you support to reduce the current level of gun violence in Virginia?

Solutions to reduce gun violence must be backed with evidence and data. Fortunately we are continuing to see marked reduction in gun deaths as states that have implemented popular gun safety proposals. The first actions a willing General Assembly must take to protect the people of Virginia include expanded background checks to include private sales, implementation of an extreme risk protection order or "red flag" law, reinstatement of Virginia's one handgun a month law, and increased penalties and possession prohibition for those who recklessly leave loaded firearms around unsupervised children and those who commit domestic violence.

Montgomery County Treasurer



Helen St. Clair

Helen St. Clair

I have 35 years of experience in the Treasurer's Office with 15 of those years as Chief Deputy Treasurer. I am currently serving as Interim Treasurer after being appointed and endorsed by the former Treasurer, W. Richard Shelton. I am a member of the Treasurer's Association of Virginia, SWVA Association and the Virginia Association of Local Elected Constitutional Officers.

1 Priority: My top priority is helping fund the county budget through the collection of real estate and personal property taxes and interest on investments. Since these monies fund over 50 percent of the total budget, they are an essential part of our financial resources to meet the County's operating and capital improvement needs.

Plans to address this priority: I will continue to improve on our 98 percent collection rate (2018). Our combined action with TACS on collection of real estate taxes more than 3 years delinquent has brought in over \$540,000. In June 2019, I sent a final tax notice that cost \$9,199 to print and mail, and because of that notice we collected \$803,000 in delinquent personal property from June 1 to August 31, that is \$458,000 more than was collected last year for the same period. I will review investment options and a RFP for banking services to assure the highest and safest investment proceeds. The collection of taxes and interest on investments are vital in helping to offset tax increases while continuing to fund the county's needs.

James "Tay" Taylor did not reply to the League

Montgomery County Board of Supervisors Candidates

District E



Darrell Sheppard

I am a lifelong resident of District E. I grew up in the Prices Fork area. I retired from the Virginia Tech Police Department at the rank of patrol sergeant in July 2012. My wife, Karen, and I live on Long Shop Road with our dog, Abby.



Robbie Jones

I am married to Joe and the mother of four grown children and two granddaughters. I am a Senior Custodian with Montgomery County Public Schools. I am past Vice President and President of the Montgomery County Education Association. I currently serve on Virginia Education Association Board of Directors. I graduated from National Education Association Leaders for Tomorrow 2018 and See Educators Run. Recently chosen to be a Trainer of Trainers with the National Education Association.

Board of Supervisors Candidates Replies

What are the supervisors' budget options for funding the county schools' ongoing capital needs and operating budget?

Darrell Sheppard

Funding options for schools come out of the county's annual budget, which comes from real estate and personal property taxes. They also get funding from the state of Virginia, grants and Montgomery County Education Foundation. Large capital projects are funded by bond issuing.

How do you perceive the county's role and/or obligations concerning the Mountain Valley Pipeline?

The county's role pertaining to the Mountain Valley Pipeline is very limited. The Board of Supervisors has no authority over any of the daily activities or permits necessary to complete work of the pipeline.

What will you do to contribute toward members of the Board of Supervisors working more collaboratively in deciding important local issues with the towns?

At this time, the Board of Supervisors has a good working relationship with both the Town of Christiansburg, the Town of Blacksburg as well as the City of Radford. I have in the past gone beyond what is normally necessary to work with the towns. This includes various techniques up to and including a meeting of the full board and the Town Council to negotiate contracts. I would go to whatever means necessary to come to a collaborative decision with either one of them.

What should the Board of Supervisors do to speed the expansion of broadband coverage throughout the county?

The Board of Supervisors has been working for some time through the very detailed logistics of providing broadband service to everyone in the county. I am confident this will happen in the very near future.

Robbie Jones

What the Board of Supervisors is doing now will help provide funding for the Christiansburg Strand needs. Keep in mind the total Capital Improvement needs of the schools as well. We need to be proactive not reactive.

The Board of Supervisors are to do what is best for Montgomery County. Mountain Valley Pipeline is in no way beneficial to Montgomery County.

Communication is the key. Working together toward a common goal for all involved will prove to be successful.

Broadband is important for many, myself included. The Board of Supervisors are taking the proper steps to expedite this.

District B



Brian Lawson

I am a small business owner originally from Fort Chiswell, but moved to the New River Valley when I was in high school. I have run restaurants and worked in sales for more than 20 years. I want to bring that experience to the Board of Supervisors in Montgomery County.

Sherrie Blevins did not reply to the League

Brian Lawson

What are the supervisors' budget options for funding the county schools' ongoing capital needs and operating budget?

The county has many opportunities and challenges when it comes to its ongoing capital needs. As a small business owner, I understand budgets and how sometimes you have to look at needs and what you are spending money on. You also have to see if there are things that can be funded differently and make sure there is room in the budget to take care of our responsibilities. We have to look at our borrowing power, keeping in mind not to hurt our credit rating. If all these options do not get us to the goal then we have to look at ways of bringing in more revenue by looking at what grants and state help there is out there and asking for that help.

How do you perceive the county's role and/or obligations concerning the Mountain Valley Pipeline?

I perceive the county's role and obligation when it comes to the Mountain Valley Pipeline by first keeping the safety of our residents a top priority - whether that is the safety of the pipeline itself and how it will impact our beautiful valley, our wildlife and the water we all drink. I also think it is the County's obligation to listen to the concerns of our landowners and surrounding landowners affected by the pipeline.

What will you do to contribute toward members of the Board of Supervisors working more collaboratively in deciding important local issues with the towns?

I've been worked with many different people and personalities during my 28 years in the restaurant business. This includes working with many small business owners. What I have found is that we all come from different places with different life experiences. I feel it's best to spend some time getting to know and finding the foundation on what we can agree on so we can make our differences easier to communicate about. I will bring an open mind and listen to proposals and the affects those proposals have on our valley.

What should the Board of Supervisors do to speed the expansion of broadband coverage throughout the county?

As a small business owner and a resident here in Montgomery County I see the challenges and the need for more reliable, accessible and affordable broadband. Our valley keeps growing, and if we are going to keep some of the best and brightest folks who are from here or who come here to get an education at one of our three fine colleges then we need to look at this as a serious issue. I think we can speed this up by looking at what is working in other parts of the country and by working with our towns, the city of Radford, and our university communities to demand and provide an up-to-date broadband system that our business community and our citizens deserve. We also need to start considering broadband a necessity keeping our businesses strong and our children from falling behind.

Incumbents unopposed for election

Montgomery County Officers

Sheriff Hank Partin
Commonwealth's Attorney Mary Pettitt
Commissioner of the Revenue Helen Poff Royal

Montgomery County Board of Supervisors

District F - Mary W. Biggs
District G - April Noelle DeMotts

Montgomery County School Board

District B - Penny J. Franklin
District E - Martisha M. "Marti" Graham
District G - Mark F. Cherbaka

Blacksburg Town Council (3 seats on ballot)

Jerry Ford Jr.
Michael Sutphin
John Bush

Why Vote?

A person who doesn't vote gives up his or her power as a citizen to others,

explained Charles Walcott, Virginia Tech professor emeritus, at the Forum on the Cost of Voting in Virginia.

The impact of your vote in local and state elections is even greater than for national elections.

County supervisors and town councils determine how taxes will be spent and make plans for our communities' future.

The Virginia Senate and House of Delegates determine:

- Funding for education,
- Health care
- Mental health care
- Equal Rights Amendment
- Gun safety,
- State environmental regulations

The video for the league forum on the Cost of Voting in Virginia is available at the league website lwvmcva.org or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bDrtD797YA>

Candidate Forum

Hear the candidates present their positions and answer questions. The forum includes a chance to submit your questions to the candidates. There is no cost to attend.

Montgomery County Candidates for Board of Supervisors School Board Treasurer

Thursday, Oct. 17, 7 - 9 p.m.

Board of Supervisors Meeting Room
Montgomery County Government Center
second floor
755 Roanoke St.
Christiansburg



VOTE411.org is a “one-stop-shop” for election related information. It provides nonpartisan information to the public with both general and state-specific information on the following aspects of the election process:

- Absentee ballot information
- Ballot measure information (where applicable)
- Early voting options (where applicable)
- Election dates
- Factual data on candidates in various federal, state and local races
- General information on such topics as how to watch debates with a critical eye
- ID requirements
- Polling place locations
- Registration deadlines
- Voter qualifications
- Voter registration forms
- Voting machines
-

An important component of VOTE411.org is the polling place locator, which enables users to type in their address and retrieve the poll location for the voting precinct in which that address is located. The League has found that this is among the most sought after information in the immediate days leading up to, and on, Election Day.

Just log onto VOTE411.org and enter your address

The League

The League of Women Voters has fought since 1920 to improve U.S. systems of government and impact public policies through education and advocacy. The League’s enduring vitality and resonance comes from its grassroots nature, with members operating at the national, state, and local levels working towards the goal of “making democracy work.”

There are Leagues in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Hong Kong, in addition to the hundreds of local Leagues nationwide.

The League of Women Voters is strictly nonpartisan; it neither supports nor opposes candidates for office at any level of government. The League makes a difference at every level of government because of the energy and passion of thousands of members around the country who work together to safeguard our democracy,