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Several counties' commissions candidates respond to questions

By Jeff M Hardison © July 20, 2022 at 9:12 a.m.

TRI-COUNTY AREA – There are candidates in all three counties of the Tri-County Area of Dixie County, Gilchrist County and Levy County in races for County Commission.

Some incumbents have won reelection in each of the three counties for County Commission because no one in their district chose to become qualified to seek office.

In Levy County, with six Republicans running for two seats, those two future county commissioners will be decided in the primary election on Aug. 23.

In Dixie County, two Democrats, two Republicans and one Write-In candidate are seeking election to one seat. Therefore, there will be chances to vote Aug. 23 and Nov. 8 for individuals in those races.

In Gilchrist County, three Republicans and one Write-In candidate are seeking election to one seat. . Therefore, there will be chances to vote Aug. 23 and Nov. 8 for individuals in those races.

Every candidate seeking election to County Commission in the Tri-County Area was given 10 questions to answer to help people decide who to select at the primary and general elections.

Some candidates were non-responsive. Their names are on the bottom of each listing for races in the three counties.

LEVY COUNTY DISTRICT 4

<p>LEVY COUNTY</p> <p>Charlene Watson Calvillo (REP)</p> <p>County Commissioner District 4</p>	
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1. Who are you?

Charlene “Watson” Calvillo, I was raised in Gulf Hammock and have lived in the unincorporated part of Levy County just outside of Chiefland’s city limits for the last 25 years. It’s no exaggeration for me to say, “I am District 4!” My entire life has been around the district I’d like to represent. I’ve personally witnessed growth and changes, some for the good and some for the bad.

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2. Why should people elect you as a county commissioner?

I feel my persistent and strong-willed personality makes me a good candidate for county commissioner. I'm not the type of person to just go with the flow on matters, I like to research and analyze information prior to deciding or voting. Working with the public most of my life has taught me clear communication skills, to be a compassionate problem solver, how to remain unflappable, tenacity, and the ability to use methodical approaches.

3. What elected position have you held before?

I served as Secretary on the Board of Directors with the Cedar Key Historical Society until deciding to run for county commissioner. During that role, I participated in multiple educational events, board meetings, facilitated out of the box ideas, and took more than a thousand photos at events that were donated to the museum.

4. How much do you know about the job of county commissioner?

Over the last four years I've put in quite a bit of homework studying city and county government. During that time, I've also written about meetings both for publication in print and online. Working as a contract writer forces one to know about the subject so to not misconstrue information to the readers. Since announcing to run for office of county commissioner I've attended the monthly meetings and received the agendas with supporting documents. I feel it is important to have knowledge of what's currently going on to be successful in the future and not trying to play catch up.

5. What are you going to do to help all of the people of your county?

I would like to create a unity between the people and government, to bridge the gap.

6. How do you intend to communicate with the general public?

I would utilize multiple sources for communication with the public. My campaign website charlene4levy.com can easily convert to a source for information and email communication. I have campaign social media accounts set up with Facebook, Instagram, and NextDoor with messaging abilities. Phone, text, and meeting in person are also fabulous sources to communicate with the public.

7. How do you feel about the press, and will you be available to answer questions from the press?

The press acts as a liaison for the people by reporting on city and county government meetings. Most workshops and meetings have very little attendance from the public unless the agenda has a controversial item. I am available for questions from the press.

8. Can you perform these duties as well as whatever is required in your other job(s)?

Should the wonderful people of Levy elect me to represent them, county commissioner will be my main job.

9. Are you married and do you have children?

I'm married to Ralph Calvillo, we were high school sweethearts that went separate ways and reconnected after 20 years. We have two boys Alex and Connor that keep us on our toes.

10. How do you feel about the Florida Department of Transportation building a toll road that goes north-south, and is to the west of Interstate 75 between Wildwood (Sumter County) and the Florida-Georgia state line?

I'm not in favor of building a toll road through Levy County. It seems like robbery to take someone's house and property to accommodate someone else's need for travel.

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LEVY COUNTY

Tim Hodge
(REP)

County Commissioner
District 4



1. Who are you?

I am a hardworking, highly ambitious person with big dreams for being your next Levy County commissioner. I grew up as a child where I was taught respect, morals and hard work. I believe I am empathetic and a compassionate person. First most important I am a man of God. I will put forth effort to help with our county issues.

2. Why should people elect you as a county commissioner?

First and most important I am very much a people person. I enjoy talking with citizens about their concerns within our county. I will look to find a solution for whatever the problem is in our county. I am a very levelheaded, non-aggressive person that will listen to people. I will be able to have a good working relationship with the other county commissioners so we can work together, not against each other. I will do my best as your county commissioner to ensure to take everyone's problem serious as the next person. Levy County is important to me, and I want to be to a voice for our County.

3. What elected position have you held before?

I have never held a public office in the past but feel being elected for a public position takes the ability to be able to learn, listen and have common sense. If elected for this position it will be a learning process in the beginning.

4. How much do you know about the job of county commissioner?

Most importantly I talk with people within the county to find out what their concerns are and what type of things they are wanting to see change within the county. I read the minutes to find out what concerns have come before the board in the county, attend meetings and speak with others in the county. There is a lot as a new commissioner I will have to learn if elected to this position. I will not take office knowing everything and will be patient to learn it the right way. I do not claim to know everything there is to know about the position and will have a lot to learn.

5. What are you going to do to help all of the people of your county?

There will be a lot of questions if I am elected to the office. I plan on listening to people and see what projects are on the table within the county. I look forward to working with the other commissioners to develop plans. I cannot make promises to people that cannot be kept. The most important thing I plan on doing for the people is being a voice, listening to their concerns

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and being honest with people.

6. How do you intend to communicate with the general public?

My cell phone number will be available, email, or meeting with people face to face. I enjoy talking one on one to a person if there is a problem. I will be available to meet with people or listen to them at any time.

7. How do you feel about the press, and will you be available to answer questions from the press?

I will be happy to answer questions from the press as long as they are legit questions and reported correctly. Most important will be if it can be discussed with the media.

8. Can you perform these duties as well as whatever is required in your other job(s)?

If elected as your next county commissioner, this will be my full-time job where I will put my full energy daily into being your county commissioner. I will always be available to the people of the county.

9. Are you married, and do you have children?

I am married to my best friend, Sandra Worthington Hodge. We have been together for 31 years and married 30. We have three children and six precious grandchildren.

10. How do you feel about the Florida Department of Transportation building a toll road that goes north-south, and is to the west of Interstate 75 between Wildwood (Sumter County) and the Florida-Georgia state line?

I am against the toll road coming through our area and will stand up for it not to come. This will take land from people, farmland, rural areas and place highway and large development. I do not support the toll road in any aspect unless it goes completely around Levy County. More people will move to the area, more crime will come into our area and more congestive traffic areas.

Billy Hinote (R-Chiefland) and Laura Mott (R-Chiefland) chose to be listed as non-responsive.

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LEVY COUNTY DISTRICT 3

LEVY COUNTY

Desiree Jerrels Mills
(REP)

County Commissioner
District 3



1. Who are you?

I am Desiree Jerrels Mills and I am a lifelong Levy County resident. I am a fourth generation Levy County resident and have spent my entire life on Levy County soil. I am married to Jerry Mills and have two children. I am an active team member in our family farming enterprise, where we manage over 4,000 acres of commodities as well as being an active member of our community by volunteering in various activities.

2. Why should people elect you as a county commissioner?

I am the candidate for county commissioner District 4 for multiple reasons. I feel that people should elect me as a county commissioner for multiple reasons. For starters, my background is extensive that provides for an exemplary amount of knowledge, making me a perfect candidate for this position. I have always been active in the community. After graduation, I was active in the Bronson community by being involved in organizations such as the Bronson Chamber of Commerce and Bronson FFA Alumni. After marrying Jerry and moving to Morriston, I became active in Williston and beyond. I was appointed as a District Board member for the Levy Soil and Water Conservation District Board. I am currently President of the Williston FFA Alumni and Treasurer of the WMHS spirit club. I am an active member of the Florida Peanut Federation, Florida Peanut Producer's Association, Florida Cattlemen's and Cattlewomen organizations as well as a member of the Levy County Farm Bureau Women's Committee. I enjoy being active in the community and helping with various causes. I have organized various fundraisers for members of our community that had medical issues among many other things I have been able to organize. I have worked in banking, real estate and am now a partner with my husband in our farming operation. My husband and I operate a large farm that provides jobs for around 10 employees annually and in the harvest season we add on an extra 100 H2A workers. My husband and I are solely responsible for planning and managing our multimillion-dollar budget.

3. What elected position have you held before?

I was appointed to the Levy Soil and Water Conservation District Board where I served for two years. On the Soil and Water Conservation District Board, I was responsible for working with a group, much like the County Commission, that was responsible for multiple activities

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involving students and the promotion of conservation. We also organized and promoted various cost-share activities that involved conservation. In addition, I have held many positions in community clubs and organizations both in the present and past.

4. How much do you know about the job of county commissioner?

I was campaign treasurer for the late Mike Joyner (Oct. 3, 1950-Aug. 4, 2021). I spoke with him on many occasions about the duties and responsibilities of a commissioner. So, I am familiar with the job. However, I do not know all of the details of the duties and the ins and out of how business is transacted. I have an incredible support group that I feel I can call upon at any time for advice and support and I feel that I can and will be an asset to the board. I have been attending commissioner meetings for the past few months and have engulfed myself to learn as much as possible so I can be ready to serve the community on day one.

5. What are you going to do to help all of the people of your county?

First of all, I want to say that I am passionate about Levy County and the decisions that are made concerning the land uses, taxes, employees and so on. I have made no promises during my campaign other than that I promise to ALWAYS do my best to make decisions that have the best interest of my county and its residents. I want to make decisions that protect the very things that each and every one of us loves about this county. I plan to have an open ear and listen to ideas and communicate when issues arise so that residents have an understanding of how decisions are made and feel that they are listened to and have a voice in local government.

6. How do you intend to communicate with the general public?

I am exploring new and innovative ideas to communicate with the public because I feel that the public needs to be involved more in what is going on at commission meetings. I plan to continue to operate my Facebook page and I will ALWAYS communicate with the newspapers and the daily news website.

7. How do you feel about the press, and will you be available to answer questions from the press?

I feel that the press is an important tool. The press is a simple way for the Commission to communicate with the public. My personality is the type that wants to fix any and all situations with compromise and I feel that communication is key in that process.

8. Can you perform these duties as well as whatever is required in your other job(s)?

I will be able to perform the duties as a commissioner in addition to my duties within the business my husband and I operate.

9. Are you married and do you have children?

I have been married to my husband, Jerry Mills Jr, for over 23 years. We have two wonderful children, Jerry, 22, and Tori, 18. Tori is a recent Williston Middle High School graduate and Jerry graduated in 2018. Both of them are attending college to obtain degrees in the agriculture industry.

10. How do you feel about the Florida Department of Transportation building a toll road that goes north-south, and is to the west of Interstate 75 between Wildwood (Sumter County) and the Florida-Georgia state line?

I DO NOT support the building of the toll road. I am especially unsupportive of the current proposed pathways. I have said this multiple times but, the truth of the matter is that I do not drive on the Interstate myself.

Clifton Harrell (R-Morrison) chose to be listed as non-responsive.

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DIXIE COUNTY DISTRICT 2

DIXIE COUNTY

Robert Ashley Donet
(DEM)

County Commissioner
District 2



1. Who are you?

My name is Robert Donet and have lived in Old Town for the past 13 years. I am a science teacher and dean of students at Nature Coast Middle School in Chiefland. My wife and I own a farm. We raise goats, chickens, vegetables and fruit.

2. Why should people elect you as a county commissioner?

I am results driven. I do not like how Dixie County has been neglected by the people who are supposed to be taking care of it. If I am elected, there will be changes. The citizens will receive the services they pay for without excuse, and other programs such as recycling and community events to help with tourism will be implemented. I also have a bachelor's degree and work in a professional position that will help me communicate effectively at the state level. I will be asking the state for help with our issues. I previously worked with Florida Department of Transportation. My primary functions were ditch digging, sign installation, herbicide crew, and driveway crew. I know about road maintenance.

3. What elected position have you held before?

I have not held any elected position, nor was I planning on running; but with the severe flooding in Dixie County and the excuse-making by the county officials, I think there needs to be change.

4. How much do you know about the job of county commissioner?

I know that county commissioners are responsible for taking care of the county, passing ordinances, finding funding, taking care of the county agencies, and listening and acting on citizens' concerns. I am sure there is a learning curve as there is in all new endeavors.

5. What are you going to do to help all of the people of your county?

- Address and resolve the flooding issues;
- Demand better maintenance of facilities and roadways;
- Implement a recycling program;
- Transparency/Root-out corruption;
- Better wages for our county workers;
- Formation of a county wide festival; and

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- Make the county attractive for businesses that pay well to benefit our citizens.

6. How do you intend to communicate with the general public?

I will communicate with the general public through newspaper articles after each meeting to report what the commission is doing for the county. I will also listen to individuals concerns if they are constructive.

7. How do you feel about the press, and will you be available to answer questions from the press?

The press is a wonderful tool and yes, I will definitely answer questions. The citizens should know what is going on in our county.

8. Can you perform these duties as well as whatever is required in your other job(s)?

Yes, the people of Dixie County need to be represented. Sometimes we must take on more responsibility for the greater good.

9. Are you married and do you have children?

I have been married for over 23 years to my wife, Rebecca Donet. We have one son, Matthew, who is 16 years old.

10. How do you feel about the Florida Department of Transportation building a toll road that goes north-south, and is to the west of Interstate 75 between Wildwood (Sumter County) and the Florida-Georgia state line?

I believe the toll road is a horrible idea. In my opinion, it will not benefit the rural counties. The toll road will promote urban sprawl, pollution and destruction to our natural areas. I hate to think that our counties would ever be like South Florida. I believe the toll road is to help profit the financial elite and not the common citizen. If I am elected, I will do everything in my ability to fight against such an atrocity.

DIXIE COUNTY

**Keith Tuten
(WRI)**

**County Commissioner
District 2**



My name is Keith Tuten. I'm a lifelong resident of Dixie County, and a 1989 graduate of Dixie County High School. After school, I immediately joined the workforce as a timber harvester (logger).

After about 15 years of being an employee, I started my own flooring business (K&S Flooring) that has been very successful for my family the past 16 years.

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I have been married for 23 years to Stacey Lamb Tuten. We have raised two children Chasity and TJ. We have three grandchildren that I would also like to see raised in Dixie County.

The people of Dixie County should write in my name KEITH TUTEN to elect as county commissioner because I have experience in budgeting, project management, cost reduction and working with the public. I am fair, honest and will work just as hard for the people of Dixie County as I do for myself. I will work on fair wages for county employees, will work to improve the infrastructure of Dixie County, and will make educated decision that improves the county.

This will be the first elected position I have held. The county commissioner job is to set policies and procedures, to budget, and to help our county departments run smoothly and efficiently.

I am researching every day to learn more about the responsibilities of the county commissioner job. Dixie County is growing at a fast pace, and I would like to be proactive and make sure the county stays ahead of the growth, and to make sure your tax dollars are spent in the most effective manner.

I will communicate with the residents in person, by phone and via email. I have several ideas, monthly meetings, website, afternoon phone calls to stay in touch with my constituents. I will treat everyone equally! I will represent Dixie County with honor and respect if elected. I will listen to everyone's opinions and ideas because they are very important to me.

I have no problem at all with the press. I will be readily available to speak with anyone at any time. If I don't know the answer to a question, I will work hard to find the answer.

A lot of people have asked me why I'm running as a write-in candidate. I am running like this because Florida changed the qualifications in 2021. The new law says a candidate must be with a party for 365 days or to run No Party Affiliation. You cannot be affiliated with any party for 365 days. By me changing my party in November 2021, I did not meet the new qualifications. So, please write in Keith Tuten and fill in the bubble on Nov. 8. Thank you for your support!

Publisher's Note: Keith Tuten answered the 10 following questions with his statements above. He will not be on the primary ballot for Aug. 23, however as he noted he will be on the Nov. 8 ballot as a write-in candidate.

- 1. Who are you?**
- 2. Why should people elect you as a county commissioner?**
- 3. What elected position have you held before?**
- 4. How much do you know about the job of county commissioner?**
- 5. What are you going to do to help all of the people of your county?**
- 6. How do you intend to communicate with the general public?**
- 7. How do you feel about the press, and will you be available to answer questions from the press?**
- 8. Can you perform these duties as well as whatever is required in your other job(s)?**
- 9. Are you married and do you have children?**
- 10. How do you feel about the Florida Department of Transportation building a toll road that goes north-south, and is to the west of Interstate 75 between Wildwood (Sumter County) and the Florida-Georgia state line?**

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DIXIE COUNTY

**Daniel Wood, III
(REP)**

**County Commissioner
District 2**



1. Who are you?

My name is James Daniel Wood III. I am a Combat Army Veteran (Operation Iraqi Freedom I, 2003 and Operation Iraqi Freedom III, 2005). I am a sixth generation Dixie Countian and a graduate of Dixie County High School. I have spent the last 16 years working in the crop insurance industry and I'm currently a certified Senior Claims Adjuster.

2. Why should people elect you as a county commissioner?

I feel like I'm the most qualified out of the candidates because of my work experience. As a person in the agricultural industry, I have met with the Florida Commissioner of Agriculture at the Capitol in Tallahassee along with other state representatives dealing with the Farm Bill and other issues affecting our agricultural community in the State of Florida. Part of my job as an adjuster is working through the claims process by calculating large sums and figures, dealing with the customer face-to-face, and working through difficult situations. I also feel my time in the military taught me valuable leadership skills.

3. What elected position have you held before?

This is my first time seeking office. I have considered it for many years. Dixie County is my home and I'm ready to be a voice for our county and its residents.

4. How much do you know about the job of county commissioner?

I have attended County Commission meetings and am familiar with how they are run. Commissioners are responsible for overseeing the county's management and departments, managing the county budget and finances, representing the county at the state and federal level. They serve both executive and legislative duties that are complex and varied, and they participate in long-range planning.

5. What are you going to do to help all of the people of your county?

Seek their input. Represent them to the best of my ability. Continue to learn about the needs of our residents and hear their concerns. Community is important. We need to all work together to make Dixie County the best it can be.

6. How do you intend to communicate with the general public?

Face-to-face as much as possible. Be present in the community. Maintain a social media page to share information and how I can be reached by message, phone or text.

7. How do you feel about the press, and will you be available to answer questions

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from the press?

I think the press is necessary for the public. I feel it should be transparent and seek the facts. Yes, I will make myself readily available to press that are viewed as valuable, trusted sources by whatever means necessary.

8. Can you perform these duties as well as whatever is required in your other job(s)?

As a crop insurance adjuster, I do much of my work from home. I work from my laptop and conduct many meetings by phone. I do travel the state but generally have a flexible schedule. To explain my current job, when there are weather related damages to crops, I am called out to access the damage and process the claim. I am also called out to perform inspections as needed. I carry a mobile office with me. I cover many miles a day to be as efficient as possible. I feel confident I can do both well.

9. Are you married and do you have children?

I have been married to Macaele Corbin Wood for 19 years, Macaele is also a sixth generation Dixie Countian. She is about to begin her 25th year at Ruth Rains Middle School. I have four children, one daughter and three sons; Jordan 22, Taylor 21, Kendon 19 and Tucker 14.

10. How do you feel about the Florida Department of Transportation building a toll road that goes north-south, and is to the west of Interstate 75 between Wildwood (Sumter County) and the Florida-Georgia state line?

I feel it would bring much needed commerce to the county, but at what cost? I will do my best to preserve our way of life, but change is inevitable. I would work to maintain our natural recourses and fight for the Dixie County we love and enjoy.

Jaffry “Big Jeff” Crawl (Dem.) and Shannon W. Tompkins (Rep.) chose to be non-responsive.

GILCHRIST COUNTY DISTRICT 4

Gilchrist County Board of County Commissioners, Dist. 4 Adam Elliott (Rep.) (no photo sent)

1. Who are you?

My name is Adam P. Elliott and I have lived in Gilchrist County since 1983. I attended school in Bell, from kindergarten through twelfth grade, and then I attended Santa Fe College for a vocational certificate for Industrial and Commercial Electrician. I have lived in the county almost all my life and I have worked in the county for just over 20 years. I have volunteered my time with various youth-oriented activities such as being a 4H Club Leader, a Director for the Suwannee River Fair and a Director for the Gilchrist County Education Foundation. My children attend school in Gilchrist, and they have been active in 4H, FFA and other activities for many years. My wife and I have a small farm where we raise cattle, chickens and goats and we believe that Gilchrist County is the best place to raise a family and live. I have always been very conservative with my money, and I intend to be even more so with the way the county spends money.

2. Why should people elect you as a county commissioner?

I have always tried to support the people of Gilchrist County in many ways by volunteering my time because when I was a youth the people always supported me, and I think that I can help more people by being a commissioner. I have been involved with several types of

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operational, maintenance and construction projects in the past 20-plus years and I have dealt with several million-dollar budgets that give me a good understanding of the processes that are involved with the way the county operates.

3. What elected position have you held before?

I have never held a paid elected position. All the elected positions I have held have been as a volunteer in my spare time.

4. How much do you know about the job of county commissioner?

I have been attending the county commissioner meetings for the past eight years or so and I have gained a good understanding of how the different departments interact with the commissioners.

5. What are you going to do to help all of the people of your county?

After speaking to several of the residents of the county, there are several different areas that the county could improve on but for the most part the top three areas of concern are Fire/EMS, solid waste and road improvements. These areas can easily be improved by using the resources of our area state representatives and by utilizing a grant writer so that the county can seek funds to improve services to its residents without causing a greater tax burden on them.

6. How do you intend to communicate with the general public?

I have mainly used social media to get my information out. With the local newspaper no longer in business, I have been speaking to people and having them help spread the word. There is a paper in Dixie County called the Advocate that I have been in contact with that now services the Gilchrist County area and I will be using them to reach the residents that do not use social media.

7. How do you feel about the press, and will you be available to answer questions from the press?

The local press does a good job of covering most of the local events and I will do my best to make myself available for comments.

8. Can you perform these duties as well as whatever is required in your other job(s)?

The county commissioners meet on the first and third Mondays of every month at 4 p.m. and they hold special meetings throughout the year. I have a fulltime job with a flexible work schedule so that I can meet with any residents at a time that is best suitable for them.

9. Are you married and do you have children?

Yes, I am married and have two daughters.

10. How do you feel about the Florida Department of Transportation building a toll road that goes north-south, and is to the west of Interstate 75 between Wildwood (Sumter County) and the Florida-Georgia state line?

The proposed toll road is something that has been in the planning stages for over 40 years. I do think that there needs to be some improvements for the north and south travel through Florida, but I do not think that building a new toll road is the best option for Florida. The already existing routes need to be expanded to add lanes, with the population growth south of Ocala this puts a strain on I-95, I-75 and all of the other old routes like 441, 301 and 19. This is something that will affect Gilchrist County, but I believe it will be limited to the most western side of Gilchrist County if the toll road was to eventually come through.

Tommy A. Langford (Rep.), Emory Philman (Write-In Candidate) and Eddy Lavane Scott (Rep.) chose to be non-responsive.

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FLORIDA

Dan Weisman
(NP)

Circuit Judge
Circuit 8 | Group 12



By Jeff M. Hardison © July 18, 2022 at 8:12 p.m.

GAINESVILLE – This is part of the series to help voters see some more about the people seeking election.

In this set, one candidate for Eighth Judicial Circuit Court Judge, Group 12 answers two questions posed to the four candidates for that post.

1. Why should a person vote for you?

Because of my broad experience, in life and in the law. Everybody wants to have a judge who's walked a mile in their shoes. My first career was in the United States Army as an infantry officer. I had to learn how to lead my sergeants and my soldiers fairly, squarely, with high standards, and without favoritism. To build good relationships, you have to get to know people on a one-to-one basis. And, like Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal said, you have to "listen, learn, then lead."

That approach served me well when I was a prosecutor for the Florida Attorney General's Office of Statewide Prosecution, which is where I went to work after finishing my service in the Army and completing law school at the University of Florida. I worked closely with seasoned detectives on long-term investigations to build large, high-profile prosecutions. Building relationships with the detectives was like building relationships with my sergeants in the Army: you treat people with respect, you get their input and you value their insight, you make a plan, and then you take action. Crime victims trusted me to get justice for them. The detectives trusted me with what they often considered "career cases." And, as a prosecutor, I always believed my highest duty of all was to do justice, which also means respecting the constitutional rights of the accused and gathering lots of admissible evidence and witness testimony so that when you convict someone, there's no reasonable doubt about the person's guilt. I was often demanding of my detectives, but I always told them essentially that "I know my way might seem harder, but it's going to make you a better detective and it's going to make for a better case." We were successful throughout the course of many major investigations and trials.

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I've taken that same approach to private practice. Being a prosecutor was rewarding and fulfilling, but when our two boys came along, I was ready for a change. In private practice, I've represented my fellow veterans, I've represented people in civil court in a variety of cases, and I've defended people who have been accused of crimes, including trying a number of cases to a "not guilty" verdict. Having a prosecutor's perspective has been good for me. Having a defense attorney's perspective has also been good for me and it has made me more complete as an attorney than I would have otherwise been. The same way that often the best coaches are people who've been masters of the offense and masters of the defense, being on both sides of the aisle in criminal courtrooms has seasoned me in a way that puts me in a position to make everybody in front of me feel like they're getting a fair day in court.

The primary job of a circuit court judge is to preside over trials. Your vote should go to someone who has picked juries and tried cases from both sides of the aisle. I believe I'm the only candidate in this race who has been a prosecutor and a defense attorney and a civil litigator. I think that this broad experience puts me in the best position to be a good judge. After all, if you have to be in front of a judge, you want to be in front of a judge who's walked a mile in most everybody's shoes. I'd be honored to earn each person's vote. I'll also take the opportunity to inform you that a quick internet search of "Weisman for Judge" will turn up my website, if anyone would like to learn more about me or my qualifications.

2. How do you feel about journalists in the courtroom?

Both the United States Constitution and the Florida Constitutions contain a provision dealing with freedom of the press. And there's good reason for this. One of the things I often talk about with my elementary school-aged boys is how in places like Russia and China, people often don't even have a fair opportunity to know what's going on, because in those countries the governments censor the Internet and deny people the opportunity to get accurate information. And when journalists in these countries try to disseminate accurate information, they get jailed or their families get threatened. Conducting our public business "in the sunshine" is the best antidote to these abuses. And giving journalists the opportunity to cover what's going on in court is one of the highest examples of our commitment to live in an open society. So, I believe journalists should have meaningful access to the courts.

Now, of course, there are certain circumstances where the time, place, and manner of this might have to be subjected to reasonable limitations. Most of my prosecutions were Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) actions against violent street gangs, but I had a few other interesting ones, too. In one case, I was prosecuting a lady for embezzlement because she was running an adoption agency and had been fleecing the people who wanted to adopt the children. The adoption law rules say that the identities of the children and the biological parents are supposed to be maintained in privacy.

But, typically, in open court, the witnesses and evidence are presented without restraint. And there was media interest in attending the trial of the case. So, I remember having to wrestle with the challenge of how we were going to balance the privacy interests of the children and the parents with the media's legitimate interest in being able to attend and report on proceedings in open court. The case never went to trial but having to wrestle with this issue made me a better lawyer. As a judge, I would take this and the rest of my experiences with me onto the bench when it comes to respecting the role that journalists play in our open court system.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: Like in the other races, all of the candidates were given the same questions in their race. The other three candidates for Eighth Judicial Circuit Court Judge

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chose against responding. Those other three, though, were at the non-partisan event in Williston on June 24, which can be viewed by clicking [HERE](#).

Three Candidates For Florida House of Representatives Dist. 22

By Jeff M. Hardison © July 19, 2022 at 3:12 p.m.

JEMLANDS – Three of the four candidates seeking to be elected to the Florida House of Representatives District 22 seat answered an email calling for replies to written questions.

Following are their replies, with the order being stacked based on their last names.

The two Democrats competing in the Aug. 23 primary are Brandon Peters (D-Williston) and Eva Olysha Magruder (D-Ocala).

The two Republicans in the Aug. 23 primary are Ty Appiah (R-Bronson) and Chuck Clemons (R-Newberry).

Magruder chose to be listed as “non-responsive” to the questions.



1. Why are you seeking election to this office?

I am seeking to be your state representative for District 22 because I believe more needs to be done for our district positively and we need people that understand the role of government such as securing our rights instead of depriving us of them. I love this county, this state, and I love this country. I don't want to wake up one morning and think I haven't done the best I could for my community.

2. What are you planning to do to help the local economy after you are elected?

I will work with county commissioners and even other representatives to ensure the best outcomes for our state and counties. Less regulation I have found is generally the best way to foster economic growth. Everyone wants the best wage possible when working as an employee and entrepreneurs typically want the best profit margins. Inflation is only increasing and

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getting worst daily. We don't need heavy-handed regulations to stifle the greatest potential and growth we can have.

3. When you are elected, how dedicated will you be to this job versus other matters such as any other job or family matters?

I will be 100 percent dedicated to this job. I have been 100 percent dedicated to this campaign. I also do work as a nurse, but other legislators do have jobs or businesses as well. Our salary is not to live on nor should it be. But in both jobs, I'd still continue to be a public servant 24/7 and I love to serve the will of the people.

4. How do you intend to communicate with the general public?

I intend to communicate with the general public with dignity, respect, and listening which every single person deserves.

5. How do you feel about a toll road through rural North Florida?

I believe growth can be very positive and brings some great advantages to our state. I also believe that these advantages are severely outweighed by the disadvantages. Homes with strong sentimental value would be destroyed and most of the constituents I have talked to here in Levy County have lived here for generations. I would love to look at better solutions we can come up with for more manageable growth without such adverse results that would affect homeowners and our environment.

6. Where are you planning to have an office other than in Tallahassee?

I live in Levy County. So, I think my office should be more central to the district, perhaps in Gilchrist County?

7. What do you think about the press?

Our press is protected by The First Amendment and our Republic relies on an honest press to inform people and tell us about current events. I have great respect for investigative journalists who love to seek truth over partisanship.

8. How familiar are you with the people who live in the area you are going to represent?

I am very familiar with the people who live in my district, but I am always learning as well about individuals specifically and even the cultural differences in each county. Everyone that has met me, has my personal phone number to call me at any time if they need me. I want to be as accessible as possible. My district is western Alachua, Gilchrist and Levy counties.

9. What are the top three issues you hope to help resolve by being elected?

* More protections for the Unborn

* Expand School Choice

* Defend the Second Amendment

10. Do you have anything else you want the voters to know as a reason to elect you?

I will be the fiercest advocate to protect our Constitutional rights, promote agricultural and entrepreneurial growth, and I'll work to ensure we have clean water for all residents in my district.

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FLORIDA

Chuck Clemons
(REP)

State Representative
District 22



1. Why are you seeking election to this office?

I am running for re-election, having served three terms representing most of this new district 22. Over the past 6 years I have championed 86 bills that has included enhanced public safety, provided raises for schoolteachers, police and correctional officers. I have worked with Attorney General Ashley Moody to close loopholes in law that would guarantee sexual predators would have to register after they served their sentences. I have also championed several bills with CFO Jimmy Patronis that provided greater protection for Floridians against fraud.

2. What are you planning to do to help the local economy after you are elected?

My commitment to the local business community has been a priority for many years. In 2021 I sponsored major legislation that leveled the playing field for not just small businesses in our area, but all businesses throughout Florida. The National Federated Independent Business (NFIB) and Tax Watch applauded the action known as the e-fairness bill, which guaranteed out-of-state sellers would not have a price advantage by not collecting sales taxes. This made it fair to Florida businesses and increased revenue by more than a billion dollars annually.

3. When elected, how dedicated will you be to this job versus other matters such as any other job or family matters?

Fortunately, I have a very supportive spouse and without her encouragement it would be impossible to hold this office and deliver the positive results we have experienced over the past six years. If you ask most elected officials and people throughout the district and you will discover my dedication, commitment and availability are the foundation of the reputation I am proud to put forward.

4. How do you intend to communicate with the public?

My offices are located throughout the district and members of the public have convenient access. My staff and I are regularly available via phone and e-mail. We hold public hearings every year in each county in the district. Our Tallahassee office in the Capitol is used by constituents while attending meetings during the legislative session.

5. How do you feel about a toll road through rural North Florida?

This seems to be a major issue and many people are using this as a wedge to divide our community. They seem to thrive on scare tactics and misinformation. Several activists who do

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not support any new roads have posed the question to me: Are you for or against the toll road? Based on the information available from FDOT now, I do not hold a position either way. I think it is wise to wait until the study is complete and we can clearly see what alternatives will be presented to the public for consideration. I understand there will be approximately four different plans. I will, however, be strongly speaking out against placing any new road through agricultural lands prior to maximizing our current capacity and rights of way that could possibly expand lanes or enhance capacity on existing roadways. Members of the Florida House and Senate do not vote on individual road projects. I encourage all members of our community to closely follow the status report that will be delivered to the Governor and Legislature at the end of 2022. Public information meetings will be held in 2023 and the PD&E study will be completed in 2024. <https://www.floridasturnpike.com>

6. Where are you planning to have an office other than Tallahassee?

I currently have offices in Newberry, Trenton and Cross City. With the district boundaries changing with reapportionment, after the election, I would locate and secure an office in Levy County for the convenience of the constituents.

7. What do you think about the press?

The press is much like all professions and as such there are some seasoned professionals who pride themselves on presenting a balanced story to the public. Unfortunately, there are also those who will bend, contort, and sometimes tell half-truths to present a bias view of the issue. I am a Ronald Reagan Republican, I always trust, but verify. I highly recommend to everyone to do the same when they are considering the source for their news.

8. How familiar are you with the people who live in the area you are going to represent?

My family came as pioneers to North Florida in 1823 just after Florida became a territory.

Over the past 199 years, my family have called this area home. As a teenager, I played football and baseball on most every High School field in the Tri-County Area. I am a first-generation college graduate who attended Florida Gateway community college and the University of Florida. My wife, Jane also comes from a pioneer North Florida family. We have lived, worked, worshiped, and volunteered for most of our lives in this community.

9. What are the top three issues you hope to help resolve by being elected?

Well, keeping taxes low, a good healthy financial reserve and keeping Florida the freest state in the nation are always at the forefront. I am proud that Florida is the envy of the nation. I am proud to say that I have been part of this process. Since first elected in 2016, my priorities have been constant: To represent the folks in our district and provide trusted, proven leadership. I have championed 89 bills for the benefit of Floridians. The district has been successful in the funding of a new high school, several fire stations and needed monies for flood mitigation. I have recognized by the Florida Farm Bureau, the Florida Chamber of Commerce and Associated Industries of Florida and Tax Watch for my work in the legislature. I am a strong supporter of law enforcement and first responders. It is an honor to have the endorsement of Bobby McCallum, Levy County Sherriff and Bobby Schultz, Gilchrist County Sherriff.

10. Do you have anything else you want the voters to know as a reason to elect you?

Please exercise your right to vote on Aug. 23 and Nov. 8. Do your research on the candidates that most closely represent your values and help get them elected.

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FLORIDA

Brandon Peters
(DEM)

State Representative
District 22



1. Why are you seeking election to this office?

I am running to ensure District 22 (Alachua, Gilchrist and Levy counties) has a representative who is accountable only to the citizens of this district and does not answer to the special interests that dominate our state government in Tallahassee. As a longtime resident of Levy County and this district, I felt it was time for me to step up to run for this position because I know I can help deliver meaningful progress and sustainable legislative wins for the people living here. Local residents want full funding of our schools and increased support for our teachers, affordable rural broadband internet service, expanded access to affordable healthcare, more economic opportunity for small business owners and good jobs. In addition, many people know that I am deeply opposed to toll roads coming through this part of the state, and I have repeatedly made it clear that I believe they would have a devastating impact on our way of life in District 22. I am ready to put my experience as a community organizer, attorney, small business owner and voting rights champion to work for my fellow residents. They can count on me to work tirelessly on their behalf to defend freedom, support prosperity and promote justice.

2. What are you planning to do to help the local economy after you are elected?

District 22 is a diverse district, and the economic needs of Alachua County differ from those of Gilchrist and Levy counties. I am committed to ensuring that this district receives robust support from the state for rural economic development, including improving our dangerous and crumbling roads and other infrastructure, expanding access to transit to ensure residents can get to work, the doctor's office and the local grocery store.

I will support our local agricultural industry to make sure it has what it needs to thrive, not just survive. Government can be a helpful partner to District 22 as we seek to expand our farmers' ability to sell our healthy food products through the global marketplace.

I will prioritize working with our utilities companies to harden our electrical grid so everyone's power can be restored quickly after a major storm. I will work with our local governments to begin planning and preparing for the impacts of sea level rise and the long-term problems they can create for homeowners and business owners alike.

I will work hard to improve educational and apprenticeship opportunities and workforce development programs so that we can align quality jobs with strong wages that support

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families and the business needs of our communities.

By delivering broadband Internet and better healthcare for Levy and Gilchrist counties, we will become a more attractive place to live and operate a business, which in turn will help create good jobs for our local residents.

I want to ensure that throughout this district we are investing and supporting small businesses, not just the big box stores. State government must do its part to support local businesses, so they have the opportunity to compete for contracts with the state. Government contracts would represent significant revenue for some businesses and would bring greater prosperity to the communities where they are located. Small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy, and I plan to use my legislative office to help our local businesses learn how to win bids for lucrative state government business - that will be one of my most important constituent services.

In Alachua County, with the University of Florida, UF Health, and Santa Fe College being such significant employers and economic drivers, I want to ensure these institutions receive significant investments and increased funding from the state. We must protect the jobs and opportunities that these community institutions create in District 22. Our education, research and technological resources make it foreseeable that District 22 will become an engine for commerce and trade throughout the state of Florida, Latin America and the world. We can literally be the envy of the state with the right advocate fighting for us in Tallahassee.

3. When you are elected, how dedicated will you be to this job versus other matters such as any other job or family matters?

Thankfully, I have had the full support of my family in my decision to enter this contest. My wonderful wife, Stacey, is a constant partner on the campaign trail, and my family fully understands the weighty expectations placed upon an elected official in our community. Prior to running in this race, I ensured my professional obligations and overall personal life were in a place that would allow me to devote myself fully to the job of being a State Representative for District 22 in Tallahassee. As a State Representative, I will be fully dedicated to doing the work of the people and delivering on my campaign pledges. I will be completely accessible to community members in all three counties and will always ensure this district has an active and engaged legislator who speaks up for the people I serve.

During the last regular legislative session, our Representatives wasted our time and squandered valuable taxpayer resources passing legislation that doesn't help meet Florida's real challenges. For example, can anyone explain to me why it was necessary for the Legislature to enact law making strawberry shortcake the "official dessert of Florida" when hundreds of thousands of Florida children go to bed hungry every night? The residents of District 22 deserve a legislator who is willing to roll up his sleeves and work hard every day to deliver real solutions to real problems. The work of the people is serious business, and there is no room for clowns or posers.

4. How do you intend to communicate with the general public?

I will hold a variety of town hall meetings and in-person meetings on an ongoing basis all around the district. I plan to communicate regularly with local leaders and other important stakeholders in all three counties and all of our cities in District 22. In addition, I will have a robust online presence on social media, via email, and through my official legislative website. I will do everything I can to ensure that I am constantly receiving public feedback about the needs of the district's residents and communicating what is happening in State Government and in the Legislature to the people who live and work here. I will always have an open door for constituents to meet with me and my staff in my legislative offices - both locally and in the

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State Capitol.

5. How do you feel about a toll road through rural North Florida?

I have consistently and vocally opposed proposals to build toll roads through rural North Florida, beginning with the so-called “Coastal Connector,” continuing with the now defunct Multi-Use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (“M-CORES”) project and ongoing to this day with the proposed Northern Turnpike Extension (“NTE”). This issue is one of my biggest motivations to run for this open legislative seat. It is an extension of my organizing efforts with the No Roads to Ruin Coalition and other anti-toll road community organizations.

I will do whatever I can to stop toll roads from being built through rural North Florida. There is no question in my mind that they will destroy our great way of life. We neither need nor want these destructive and unnecessary toll roads in our communities. This bad idea is merely a lobbyist-driven political boondoggle for highway paving contractors and developers who build shoddy crackerbox homes in sprawling subdivisions.

The State needs to hear our voices and stop all efforts to bring toll roads through our beautiful part of Old Florida. If I am elected, District 22 will have an anti-toll road champion in the State House who will never waver in the fight against these greed-fueled roads to ruin.

Three years ago, the Florida Legislature spent tens of millions of taxpayer dollars studying whether the M-CORES toll roads were necessary. Two years ago, those studies showed that the roads were not only unnecessary but actually harmful to our springs, rivers, lakes, farms, pastures and hunting grounds. Nothing has changed in the time since except for the name of the toll roads project proposed by the Legislature for our area of the state. Instead of calling the project “M-CORES,” the Florida Department of Transportation now calls it “NTE.”

So, why did the Legislature pass a law in 2021 to fund yet another toll roads study for Levy County and three surrounding counties that lasts for 30 years at a taxpayer cost of over \$1B to determine the “need” for NTE? When the answer isn’t obvious, follow the money. As much as anything happening right now in Tallahassee, this ongoing discussion about building toll roads through District 22 points to the importance of having new representation in the Legislature. The unholy and corrupting influence of special interest politics is alive and well in the form of legislators who have consistently supported building these toll roads. The voters of District 22 have the power - and the right - to stop it by electing a representative who will fight for them on issues like this, issues that matter.

Everyone living in District 22 knows these toll roads are a horrible idea. But don’t take my word for it. Look at the report filed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection earlier this year, which states that the proposed “Northern A” NTE route that zig-zags through Levy County will generate substantial contamination and have a significantly negative impact on Levy County’s wetlands and surface waters. Or consider the fact that another state agency, the Southwest Florida Water Management District, has registered its opposition to all four routes proposed for NTE because of the negative impact each of the routes will have on state conservation efforts.

I respectfully disagree with the people who say, “These toll roads are coming.” I refuse to accept that sort of defeatist attitude, and I will not rest until We the People defeat toll roads like the NTE and the career politicians who keep pushing for them. The people of District 22 do not oppose growth. We support smart growth. To folks with common sense, “smart growth” looks nothing like expensive, damaging and unnecessary toll roads. Let’s widen and repair the roads we’ve already got here in District 22 before we go any further in this silly conversation about building destructive toll roads.

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6. Where are you planning to have an office other than in Tallahassee?

I live in Levy County, and a significant portion of the district's population is in Alachua County. So, I would want to maintain an office in both counties in locations that are fully accessible to the residents of Gilchrist County. I will also travel to each of the counties for regular town hall meetings and sit-downs with local elected officials

7. What do you think about the press?

The media performs an irreplaceable role in our society, helping inform the public about important matters, holding the powerful accountable and demanding transparency from our elected officials. I respect and support the job the press does and fully support being open, accessible and honest with members of the press. Attacks on journalists and the media by politicians are inappropriate and often dangerous. I want the press to know I support their work.

8. How familiar are you with the people who live in the area you are going to represent?

I am deeply familiar with the people of District 22. Although my wife and I were born and raised in different parts of the Sunshine State, we moved to this area years ago because we love what the people living here before us have enjoyed for many generations. My family and I absolutely adore our fellow residents in District 22 - the people of this community embrace hard work, care for one another, support their families, and have strong moral values.

I am so grateful to live in this part of our wonderful state. I have come to know and respect so many of our community leaders in this district. I realize that if I am elected, I would not be representing myself, but rather acting as the voice of the people in the Florida State House. That would be an important and humbling responsibility.

If I have the privilege of serving District 22 in Tallahassee, I will continue to engage with neighborhoods and communities throughout this district, and I would embrace my role so completely that I become as well-acquainted with this diverse slice of Real Florida as the people whose families have lived here for many generations. Regardless of whether I win or lose, I want folks living here to know that I will never stop working alongside them for the good of our community.

9. What are the top three issues you hope to help resolve by being elected?

First, I want to increase funding for all forms of education, including early childhood education, K-12, higher education and trade apprenticeships so that we can ensure everyone in District 22 has the opportunity to obtain job skills and receive a great education. This includes increasing pay for our teachers and other educators so that the profession is able to retain talented education professionals and find enough qualified job applicants to meet our needs. A robust, well-funded public education system is vital to the future of our great state - policies that provide reliable funding for public education are supported by parents, and they are supported by the Florida Chamber of Commerce. The only people who don't support a fully-funded public education system are our current state legislators. That explains why Florida is ranked 45th in the nation in funding its public schools.

Second, I want to expand access to affordable healthcare in this district, including expanding Medicaid and ensuring Medicaid covers dental, hearing and vision care. No one in our district should go without necessary medical care or suffer economic ruin due to the high costs of medical care and prescription drugs. This is a problem our state government can fix if we have the will to do so - as the Representative for this district, I plan to lean into the solutions. Expanding Medicaid will bring tens of billions of dollars into Florida's economy - most of that is money that all of us have already paid to the federal government in the form of

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income taxes. We want that money back, working for us here in District 22. If we expand Medicaid in Florida, that will dramatically improve the likelihood of being able to build and maintain a good, quality medical campus to serve our rural counties in District 22. I cannot think of any good reason why our residents should have to travel up to an hour-and-a-half each way to go to a doctor's appointment in downtown Gainesville. That makes me mad, and I deeply resent the bureaucrats and politicians who have blocked Medicaid expansion for years.

Finally, I want to deliver reliable and affordable high-speed Internet for everyone in District 22. Lack of access to stable internet access in this district hinders our quality of life, our education system, and our economy. We have the technology and resources needed to ensure our district is fully covered by the best internet service available, and I want to make certain this happens without delay. I will work closely and cooperatively with CFEC, the County Commissions and other stakeholders to advance the good projects that are already under way. It galls me that my neighbors and I have only one lousy option for internet service - expensive satellite service that fails just as soon as cloud cover becomes too heavy. In today's competitive economy, the status quo is unsustainable. And it's not compatible with my vision for District 22 as a hub for commerce in North Central Florida.

10. Do you have anything else you want the voters to know as a reason to elect you?

It has been an honor and a privilege to interact with so many people in District 22 throughout my campaign. I am constantly reminded that there is so much that can be done to help our district prosper and thrive. My campaign is about delivering real results for our people. I want voters to know that I will always be focused on how I can deliver results for them and serve the people who honor me with their trust. If I am elected, this district will have a representative that works tirelessly. It will have an ally who listens more than he talks. It will have an advocate who will roll up his sleeves and work with anybody and everybody who wants to do good things for our communities. Let's spend less time focusing on what's wrong with our state and figuring out who to blame. Let's spend more time celebrating what is truly great about Florida and figuring out who to thank. If that makes sense to the people reading this column, then I hope they will consider giving me a chance to be their voice in the Legislature.

Most School Board candidates respond

By Jeff M. Hardison © July 20, 2022 at 10:12 a.m.

TRI-COUNTY AREA – With School board races being non-partisan, like the races for circuit court judge, those contests will be decided Aug. 23 in the primary election.

Some School Board members in the Tri-County Area of Levy County, Dixie County and Gilchrist County were reelected after no one in those counties qualified in time to run against them.

All of the qualified candidates were sent eight questions to answer to help voters decide who to pick for these races. Following are the candidates who responded, with non-responsive candidates being noted under the races in which they are running.

Levy County School Board, District 5

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LEVY COUNTY

Larry E. Jones
(NP)

School Board Member
District 5



1. Who are you?

I am Larry E. Jones. I am running for Levy County School Board District 5. I have many years experience and contacts from working in the State College System. I have a calm demeanor and an innate ability to problem solve and help people. My wife, Carolyn Garreau-Jones is a Middle School Science Teacher at Bronson Middle High School.

2. Why are you seeking office?

I would like the opportunity to serve on the Levy County School Board to bring my years of experience in maintenance/grounds construction facility related services to the school district. I believe that ALL students, teachers and staff, deserve schools that are clean, safe, and well maintained.

3. Do you know the duties you are seeking to accept? How are you the most qualified to complete these duties?

I have attended a few School Board meetings. I have also viewed some of the School Board meetings. online. As an elected School Board member it is each member's responsibility to represent the community they are elected for along with the entire county. If elected, I will follow Article IX, section 4(b) of the Florida Constitution that states, "The school board shall operate, control and supervise all free public schools within the school district and determine the rate of school district taxes within the limits prescribed [by the constitution]." A school board is responsible for the hiring and firing of teachers, administrators, and other school personnel, developing policies, procedures for evaluating programs and personnel, system organization, school site location, school finance, equipment purchase, attendance, curriculum, extracurricular activities, and other functions essential to the operation of public schools within the district's boundaries.

4. Do you believe a superintendent of schools should give himself or herself an annual percentage raise beyond the amount set by the Florida Legislature?

The superintendent of any School Board in the state of Florida cannot arbitrarily give themselves a raise. The raise must be approved by the current School Board members. I believe that the amount given should not be a percentage of their salary and then it keeps adding on each year by the same percentage. I believe that the raise should be in line with what all other teachers, district employees and staff are receiving. There must be an evaluation process that

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the superintendent has just like all other teachers, district employees and staff are receiving

5. Do you believe in banning books from teachers to use in their lesson plans?

I do not believe in banning books.

6. Why are businesses needing to supplement funding for public schools by giving booster clubs and others money? Why can't taxpayers cover the cost of public education?

Taxpayer funds are to be used to cover the cost of students' learning during educational hours, to include teachers, staff, and district employee salaries/benefits, buildings, buses, and other supplies. Extracurricular activities are not completely covered in this funding. Therefore, monies from the community is needed to supplement these after educational hours activities.

7. While there is a strong trend for students to become trade-oriented, do you understand the need to have a college-bound academic track in place to keep Florida students in the running to be doctors, lawyers, journalists and other professionals?

I am an advocate of lifelong learning. Many years after high school, I returned to college to receive my Bachelor's in Applied Science in Supervision and Management. I hold the belief that all Levy County students are capable of graduating and enrolling in college, or enlisting in the military, or becoming employed in a career field of their choice. While the students need to make their choice of what they want for their life, it is the School Boards job/responsibility to offer the students multiple opportunities for this.

8. Why should I vote for you?

I would make an excellent addition to the School Board of Levy County, by bringing all of my years of experience, contacts, calm demeanor, and ability to problem solve. I have over 20 years of experience in the college school system, experience in managing and motivating a diverse workforce, budgeting, and so much more.

LEVY COUNTY

Devin Whitehurst

(NP)

School Board Member

District 5



1. Who are you?

I am Devin Whitehurst, a fourth generation Levy County resident and have lived in Williston my entire life. My wife, Annie, and I have been married 19 years. We are proud parents of four, Annabelle, Maybree, Tucker, and the late Cooper Whitehurst. We are both Levy County High

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School graduates and our children attend school here, as well. I graduated from the University of Florida where I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance.

2. Why are you seeking office?

Having always had a passion for the wellbeing and education of the children in the community, I am seeking the Levy County School Board, District 5 seat in hopes to become an integral part in the growth and development of these students. I want the children of Levy County to be afforded the best education possible with endless opportunities to grow, prosper and become productive citizens of society, whether continuing their education or beginning their career.

3. Do you know the duties you are seeking to accept? How are you the most qualified to complete these duties?

If elected, I would serve as one of the five board members of the Levy County School Board, tasked with setting the policies in which the Levy County School System is governed. I believe being an active parent of three children currently enrolled in Levy County schools, along with my background as a graduate makes me the most qualified. My education, experience of helping run a local business in this county along with my diverse civic service in the community adds to my qualifications for the SBLC, District 5 seat.

4. Do you believe a superintendent of schools should give himself or herself an annual percentage raise beyond the amount set by the Florida Legislature?

No public official should be able to give himself or herself a raise. However, as a private business owner, I know we need to have the ability to reward exceptional work which is usually done with additional compensation. I believe in fostering an environment where success is pursued and rewarded. I do know the school board and teacher's union negotiate salaries and wages for school board employees.

5. Do you believe in banning books from teachers to use in their lesson plans?

I believe the books that teachers are using in the classroom should align with the policies set by the Levy County School Board and by the Florida Department of Education. If the books do not conform to that standard, then they should be banned.

6. Why are businesses needing to supplement funding for public schools by giving booster clubs and others money? Why can't taxpayers cover the cost of public education?

An exceedingly small portion of the School Board budget is earmarked for the expenses that are related to sports or other clubs. If it were not for booster clubs and other donated monies, many of these sports, clubs and opportunities would not exist. The state and federal government also have strict guidelines as to how the School Board budget is spent. If an individual or company wants to give back to their school by making contributions to these entities, then I see no problem in it. It helps foster a sense of community pride that makes this county so great. I have contributed to many of these throughout the years and I appreciate the many others in our county who do the same.

7. While there is a strong trend for students to become trade-oriented, do you understand the need to have a college-bound academic track in place to keep Florida students in the running to be doctors, lawyers, journalists, and other professionals?

As a local graduate that went on to earn a bachelor's degree, I am certainly a proponent of higher education. I am the third generation in my family to earn a college degree. We certainly need people pursuing degrees to become professionals. For a long time, the focus was on the college track – which I think is the reason we have seen a decline in tradesmen. I know the

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importance of learning a skill or trade and having employees in the labor industry, as well. The simple fact is that college is not for everyone. I think an alternative to having every student on track to be college bound is to expose students to as many different career paths and programs as we can to help them decide what path they want to take. America has been built on the backbone of trade professions and there are lots of trades where individuals are paid much higher wages than those with college degrees. Our students should know that. They should be exposed to college opportunities, as well. I think more than anything, we need to encourage our students to find a path that leads them to work. Whether that be through using a college degree or a trade or skill – we need to make sure they are ready to eventually go to work. My great grandfather only had a sixth grade education but knew the value of hard work and determination. His vision set the foundation for generations of success in my family.

8. Why should I vote for you?

Through strong leadership, effective communication, compassion, and empathy, I believe I possess the experience and skills to be an asset to the Levy County School Board. As a community-oriented parent, with a mind for business and fiscal responsibility, I also believe I am the most qualified candidate for District 5, and I would appreciate your vote!

Scott Hall (NP) chose to be non-responsive.

Dixie County School Board District 2

<p>DIXIE COUNTY</p> <p>Charles “Chuck” Farmer (NP)</p> <p>School Board Member District 2</p>	
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1. Who are you?

Charles (Chuck) Farmer

2. Why are you seeking office?

I feel as if I still have a lot of knowledge and experience to offer in my current position on the board.

3. Do you know the duties you are seeking to accept? How are you the most qualified to complete these duties?

After serving three terms on the Dixie County School Board, I have a vast knowledge and understanding of the duties a School Board member holds. I have much experience in working

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with the school budget and policies which is a huge part in serving as a board member.

4. Do you believe a superintendent of schools should give himself or herself an annual percentage raise beyond the amount set by the Florida Legislature?

No.

5. Do you believe in banning books from teachers to use in their lesson plans?

I don't necessarily believe in banning books, but I do believe that parents should have a choice so to speak on what books they feel are appropriate for their own child.

6. Why are businesses needing to supplement funding for public schools by giving booster clubs and others money? Why can't taxpayers cover the cost of public education?

School clubs are not federally or state funded at this time. So, sometimes support from the community is needed and appreciated.

Florida traditional public schools are free and paid for out of tax dollars.

50.11 percent comes from local sources , 39.15 percent are from state sources, 50.11 percent is county (ad valorem) property taxes and income tax, and 10.73 percent comes from federal sources. (This is information pertaining to the 2019-20 school year.)

7. While there is a strong trend for students to become trade-oriented, do you understand the need to have a college-bound academic track in place to keep Florida students in the running to be doctors, lawyers, journalists and other professionals?

Yes, I absolutely understand the need for education for future doctors, lawyers and so forth. Just as I understand the need for classes for those seeking trade programs.

8. Why should I vote for you?

I believe that my strong knowledge of the duties of a board member will continue to help me make the best decisions for our school district. I have experience in traveling back and forth to Tallahassee during the legislative process to acquire funds for projects and school safety.

DIXIE COUNTY

**Amanda Mills NesSmith
(NP)**

**School Board Member
District 2**



1. Who are you?

My name is Amanda Mills NesSmith and I am a lifelong resident of Dixie County for 42 years. I am a conservative Christian and I attend the Cross City Church of God. I am the

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daughter of Marie Sikes Fowler and W.C. and Tracy Mills. I have been married to Aaron Corbin NesSmith for 13 years. Together we have two children, Harley, 11, and Aldwyn, 7, who both attend Dixie County schools. I am an Operation Iraqi War Veteran. I have served for 24 years in the Florida Army National Guard. I have been full-time with the National Guard as a Recruiting and Retention Career Counselor for the last 14 years. I am a 1998 graduate of Dixie County High School; a 2007 graduate of Lake City Community College with an Associate in Arts Degree; a 2011 graduate of Saint Leo University with a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice. I have also completed many advanced military trainings and leadership courses.

2. Why are you seeking office?

I have a personal interest in preserving and improving the quality of our school district, as I have small children that attend the schools here. I will help influence the district budget by ensuring the fiscal health of the district funds and holding our district accountable for our tax dollars. I will represent all the citizens in our community and ensure that everyone has a voice in making educational and administrative decisions. As a member, I will be a voice for the concerns and interests of all district employees and all parents/guardians. I will help create stronger ties between the school board and our community. I believe in quality public education for current and future students. This community deserves a school board that will invite you to the table, meet you with transparency and honesty, and represent your interests. Our children deserve a standard of education that will allow them to succeed. Our taxpayers deserve to have their money allocated fairly and responsibly without undue burden.

3. Do you know the duties you are seeking to accept?

Yes, I have read Florida Statute, Title XLVII, Chapter 1001.42. Powers and duties of district school board and I am very familiar with all 28 duties and responsibilities.

How are you the most qualified to complete these duties?

I don't believe you have to be "qualified" or have certain qualifications to serve as a School Board member or someone that knows the Florida Statute on the duties, but I do believe you need to be a parent and someone that is adaptable to change and willing to learn. Not only am I a parent to a second grader and sixth grader in the Dixie County School district, but I also have 24 years of military experience. My relevant skills while I've been in the military include leadership, discipline, communication, teamwork, integrity, dedication, dependability and project management. I have structured my life around the military for all of those 24 years; discipline and structure are a natural part of my life skills. Further, 19 of those years in the military include experience as a horizontal construction engineer and a hurricane and disaster relief liaison. In those 19 years, I mastered my skills as a heavy equipment operator, asphalt and concrete equipment operator, and logistics specialist. A skill set, such as I have obtained, can only benefit any candidate in their effectiveness in public office. I have also spent many enjoyable hours coaching girls' softball, volunteering in the school and community, and through our church activities. I serve as PTO/SAC president at OTES. Through my volunteer work, and since serving as PTO/SAC president, I have noticed a great need for more parent involvement in our district's decisions, and many parents want a new voice for their children and their children's teachers. So, this inspired me to seek the office and I feel makes me the most qualified.

4. Do you believe a superintendent of schools should give himself or herself an annual percentage raise beyond the amount set by the Florida Legislature?

First and foremost, I do not believe the Superintendent should get a pay raise higher than what any district employee receives annually. Further, I do not believe the Superintendent should receive a raise at all if ALL district employees don't also receive the same annual

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percentage raise. Once all district employees receive a fair/competitive pay salary and annual percentage pay raise (not including a bonus), then the Superintendent can receive a pay raise, but only the amount set by Florida Legislature.

5. Do you believe in banning books from teachers to use in their lesson plans?

I believe that teachers should use the books that are required by the Florida Department of Education as part of their curriculum, which are those that the teachers evaluate each year for use, and any other pre-approved children's books that will benefit their lesson plans. No books or literature should be used that is inappropriate and goes against anyone's core values. The teachers in Dixie County are all fair-minded, passionate, honest, skilled, and supportive educators. All of our district schoolteachers have a clear and shared focus on providing quality education to our students and use only authorized books

6. Why are businesses needing to supplement funding for public schools by giving booster clubs and others money? Why can't taxpayers cover the cost of public education?

We live in one of the most supportive communities in the Tri-County Area. We have a community that rallies together and loves to help, especially when it involves our children. Do I believe that taxpayers should cover the cost of public education? Yes. But with that being said, I know it isn't always the case. For the most part, it is funded by taxpayers, but there is more to funding teachers than just providing schools with school supplies and a limited amount they can spend. Teachers need a fully stocked classroom and a welcoming environment to provide the best quality of education to our children, and those funds are very limited. Our community wants to see our educators succeed, so we don't mind helping where help is needed. I also believe that our county could tap into more grant money for our educators and school district. If elected, I will make that happen by spending as much time as I can with our Florida Legislators.

7. While there is a strong trend for students to become trade-oriented, do you understand the need to have a college-bound academic track in place to keep Florida students in the running to be doctors, lawyers, journalists, and other professionals?

I understand this better than anyone, as I currently hold three trade skills and a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice. Our society can't survive without plumbers, welders, farmers, electricians. It also can't survive without doctors, lawyers, nurses and accountants. I think trade-oriented students and those who want to pursue higher education all have the same value, and I admire anyone that chooses any direction for career progression. I think college as a whole is on the downhill slide in general, with the higher cost of education, more students are deterred from college at any level.

8. Why should I vote for you?

Speaking as a parent, the qualities that I have always looked for most in a school board member are not a person's personal politics, big money, or a person's familial background; but (1) does the school board member put the needs of the district children above all else? (2) has the school board member demonstrated a willingness to stand up for our children when others will not? (3) does the school board member possess the ability to take on difficult problems and come up with creative solutions that are in the best interests of our children? and (4) is the school board member looking for ways to improve our schools, rather than accepting a district that is "good enough" because "that's the way we've always done it." I believe that I satisfy each of the above criteria, and believe I am the best candidate for the job.

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Gilchrist County School Board, District 3



1. Who are you?

Michelle Walker-Crawford

- Lifelong resident of Gilchrist County
- Attended Gilchrist County Schools K-12
- BS Agriculture Education and Extension Services - University of Florida 1987
- MS Agriculture Education - University of Florida 2009
- Married, 2 children both graduates of Gilchrist County Schools
- Grandchildren now attending Gilchrist County Schools
- Educator with 34 years continuous experience
- Certified to teach Agriculture 6-12, ESE K-12, Reading Endorsed.

2. Why are you seeking office?

- I am seeking Reelection to the District 3 School Board seat to finish work that has been started with the multi-million dollar building project on the Trenton High campus.
- Help see the district through the transition from Common Core (Florida Standards) to the new BEST Standards.
- To continue as an advocate for teachers, parents and students.
- I have a vested interest in Gilchrist County Schools, the success of our students is a direct indication of this community in the next generation, seeing our students develop into productive citizens should be a goal for all of the citizens.

3. Do you know the duties you are seeking to accept?

● I would refer the reader to Florida Statute 1001.42 Powers and duties of district school board. <https://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2021/1001.42>

● Also <https://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2021/1012.22>

● Yes, I know the duties of the office that I am running for. I have been trained in these duties and have received professional inservice each year due to changes in the statutes and laws, along with required state Ethics training.

How are you the most qualified to complete these duties?

- I am currently a Certified Board Member with FSBA, I have received additional hours of

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training in the areas of: Florida Education Finance (FEFP), the FEFP formula, base student allocations (BSA), district cost differentials (DCD's), required local effort (RLE), categorical and lottery funding, capital outlay funds, truth in millage (TRIM), full time equivalents (FTE), student enrollment projections and weighted FTE.

- All board members have received training in the following areas: Sunshine Law, Public Records, Parliamentary Procedure, School Finance, Policy Governance, and Personnel and Bargaining Issues

- I have been involved with the Gilchrist County School system continuously for the last 34 years, beginning as a teacher, parenting my own children in the system and currently as a board member. I am aware of the challenges and the rewards of this position.

4. Do you believe a superintendent of schools should give himself or herself an annual percentage raise beyond the amount set by the Florida Legislature?

- Superintendent's salary is set by the Florida Legislature, any addition to that amount would have to be voted on by the local School Board. The superintendent, just like the board members of that particular district, is aware of the salary he/she would make when qualifying to run for the position. The legislature sets the salary based on the population of each district. One person cannot make this decision should a superintendent request a raise. I am secure in my answer to this question as "No."

5. Do you believe in banning books from teachers to use in their lesson plans?

- "Banning Books," that's a big statement. This question is huge and has many opportunities for answers that could lead the reader to assume one way or the other.

Do I believe there are books that should not be on shelves or in classrooms? Absolutely.

We live in an age that makes obtaining books of any title quite easy for the average person, students included... if they want them (this should be scary to parents both in and out of the school setting). Schools should not be in the business of purchasing every title available. Schools should be in the business of making students lifelong learners, not providing every title possible in a media center.

Do I believe that a teacher should have the opportunity to explain to a committee why he/she would want to use a specific title in the classroom before he/ she uses it? Absolutely. I would hope that the teacher would be grateful for the opportunity to explain to a committee why he/she wanted to use said title and why there was not another choice to make the same point in the classroom. Committee makes a determination and the teacher follows the recommendation.

Do I believe there should be an oversight committee for the use of specific titles that might be in question for specific subjects/content/age groups before use? Absolutely. Possibly: principal, reading coach, content area teacher and parent or School Advisory Member.

Do I believe the teacher should follow the direction of the oversight committee, when given a recommendation? Yes.

Again, the Florida Legislature is providing guidance for school districts with new laws for media centers and available print materials beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.

6. Why are businesses needing to supplement funding for public schools by giving booster clubs and others money? Why can't taxpayers cover the cost of public education?

- Again, we have many different ideas going on with this question...Booster Clubs are usually a generic term given to those organizations that parents often develop, with the main goal being to help offset costs for the group they represent. Booster clubs will help raise funds for additional needed equipment or supplies, travel expenses or even food for trips that the

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school is not able to afford. Schools are given budgets by the district, they must work with the dollars through a fiscal year, not knowing what events are ahead of them, which teams/clubs or how many teams/clubs will qualify for a state competition or an additional contest.

- Taxpayers can not cover all of the expenses of public education. Districts are given a set dollar amount each year for students that are assigned to a specific school in order to get these dollars the student has to be counted as a student at the designated school in both October and February. The same dollar amount is given for each student in the state.

- Your question asked Why are businesses needing to supplement ... Dixie, Levy and Gilchrist counties are low income, rural communities with populations of students who many times don't know where their next meal is coming from. Often the idea of a student having enough money for a pair of "cleats" or an "FFA" jacket is not even an item that can be discussed at the supper table. Booster clubs and alumni organizations stand in the GAP for these kids. Because of the efforts of people in these communities who organize and support our kids we have been personal witnesses to those students that have been able to go on and make a successful life for themselves. We have to teach and show these students the benefits of being servant leaders. That is a booster club.

7. While there is a strong trend for students to become trade-oriented, do you understand the need to have a college-bound academic track in place to keep Florida students in the running to be doctors, lawyers, journalists and other professionals?

- This question is interesting. Yes, I do understand that there is a need for the college-bound academic track. I also think that we as parents and educators may want to force our own direction on a student without listening to what our student may be trying to tell us. Career paths usually change at least three times before the students settle, they have to be allowed to explore opportunities.

- Your question becomes confusing for me as there will always be students who want to work with their hands or a trade and there will always be students who want to be professionals. We have many of each who are extremely successful within our communities. The only trend I see is our inability to offer more tracks because of lack of funding or proving need.

- This is an absolute palace where school boards can work harder; introducing career areas and occupations to students in elementary schools, working with middle schools to develop orientation and exploration career content and then in high school providing courses that allow our students to see both career and technical careers alongside college tracks. If a student wants to go to a four year school and has made the effort during their high school years, college is available.

8. Why should I vote for you?

- I work hard at this job. It is difficult. I appreciate the opportunity that has been given me so far, I will continue working for the benefit of our children and grandchildren.

- I am a proven leader who has the education, ability and dedication to be successful in this position for the students of Gilchrist County. I love what I do.

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GILCHRIST COUNTY

**William Mikell, Jr.
(NP)**

**School Board Member
District 3**



1. Who are you?

I'm a Christian, Son of the American Revolution, (SAR), conservative, American, citizen of Gilchrist County. My name is Billy Mikell, I am married to Lori Mikell, who is a Pre-K teacher at Bell Elementary School. We have a son, Trevor with his wife Sienna, son Maverick and daughter Sophie. My family homesteaded here in the late 1800s, my dad graduated in 1955, me in 1980 from Trenton High School and my daughter graduated this year from Bell High School. My degrees are from the former Lake City Community College, and The University of Florida, obtaining Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Education. As well as classes in post baccalaureate graduate level classes in Agriculture education and professional development classes in administrative supervision and various disciplines.

2. Why are you seeking office?

I seek the District 3 School Board seat of Gilchrist County School Board. We have seen good and bad in education through the years and my goal is to work with fellow board members and the superintendent to bring back the policies that helped in our education, giving students a sense of purpose starting with the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of knowledge. Secondly, I believe term limits is good for any office. Two terms maximum for any office including school board. I feel like this would limit bias, which is a good thing.

3. Do you know the duties you are seeking to accept? How are you the most qualified to complete these duties?

Yes, I know the duties I pledge to accept as outlined below. I pledge to 1. SET A VISION for students to have a sense of value, belonging and why they are here and where the possibilities are. 2. ADVANCE POLICY by setting practical guidelines for transforming its vision to reality. 3. DEMONSTRATE ACCOUNTABILITY by sharing responsibility with educators through standards, transparency, and accountability. 4. LEADERSHIP ROLE IN COMMUNITY by listening to and responding to community concerns and explained priorities. 5. FORGE CONSENSUS by pursuing consensus, reconciling differences, and by reaching compromises to serve students best.

My experiences as a student, intern, bus driver, teacher, dean of students, peer facilitator, and parent gives me a unique perspective of the success, problems and concerns that face these individual jobs seen on a day-to-day basis. These individual roles are on the front line of

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today's public education. My background and familiarity with these help in the current issues that they face and the desire to fix them. I'm also available to devote more time to these since I'm not full time employed in other jobs or ventures.

4. Do you believe a superintendent of schools should give himself or herself an annual percentage raise beyond the amount set by the Florida Legislature?

No.

5. Do you believe in banning books from teachers to use in their lesson plans?

No, because some would want to ban the bible, but I do believe some guidelines or stipulations should be considered: A.) Is it relevant to the subject being taught? B.) Is it biased/slanted toward one theory or thought? C.) Does it contradict other known truths? D.) Does it encourage the student to think for themselves.

6. Why are businesses needing to supplement funding for public schools by giving booster clubs and others money? Why can't taxpayers cover the cost of public education?

Businesses are needed for things that are extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, etc. where funding for schools is based on intra-curricular, teachers, books, computers, and supplies that assist in education of students toward standards. Taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for "extra stuff." If you look at charter or private schools these extracurricular activities are footed primarily by the student/parent desiring that activity such as members of the football team and basketball teams, etc. Then, if a student is really gifted, donors to those schools will find a way for them to play.

7. While there is a strong trend for students to become trade-oriented, do you understand the need to have a college-bound academic track in place to keep Florida students in the running to be doctors, lawyers, journalists, and other professionals?

Absolutely. This comes down to our vision as a culture of the "good life." A person's vision of the "good life" is driven by something called "paideia." Christianity shaped our western, "vision of the good life" what is man? Our assumptions about man's nature transforms everything that is downstream in culture? Every assumption is based on religion even if that religion is atheistic humanism. Pete Hegseth wrote in his book, "Battle of the American Mind," "while progressive is a broad term now associated with the left in America, "the progressives" were once a more concentrated and organized force. Their vision was not entirely economic.

It was rooted in culture. In reality, their vision was for a new civilization that would replace Christianity and America's Western classical roots with a cultural form of Marxism." This paideia (western Christian) originally encouraged the seven liberal arts: grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. The school of Plato taught that through these they could discover God, where God would become the standard, rather than the Greek gods. This leads to the development of great minds that developed many different and exciting disciplines. This can be the result for future generations if we restore this since of purpose to our youth.

8. Why should I vote for you?

People should vote for me because I'm not the "status quo." I'm for limiting the policies that have had us venture into areas that is not for sound teaching and start maximizing sound teaching that will enable students to better themselves in all areas of education.

I'm for having more input from parents in the adoption of these sound principles that would help us not lose the best and brightest opting for home schooling or other private schools.

I'm for a recovering a lost philosophy of education- grounded in virtue and excellence- that

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can arm future generations to fight for freedom.

I'm for classical Christian education that will enable students as Christ enables us as stated in Matthew 6, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all of these things shall be added unto to you." Matthew 6:33. And as the Proverb writer states, "A good name is to be chosen, rather than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." Proverbs 22:1

Gilchrist County School Board, Dist. 5



1. Who are you?

My name is Dustin Deen Lancaster. I am a fourth generation Gilchrist County resident. I am married to my wife Lena, and have three children. Most of my extended family resides in Gilchrist County. I am a local business owner. I am of Christian faith and a political conservative. I am a product of the Gilchrist County School District, graduating in 1987 as Valedictorian of my class. I then attended the University of Florida and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Industrial & Systems Engineering. I am currently a real estate broker and certified residential real estate appraiser. This has been my profession since 1996. All of my children are graduates of the Gilchrist County School District and my wife is employed at Trenton Elementary.

2. Why are you seeking office?

I currently hold the position of District 5, School Board member. I am seeking re-election to my current position. I was appointed to my current position by Governor Rick Scott in 2012. I have run un-opposed twice. I enjoy my work as a School Board member, and I am humbled that the constituents have trusted me all these years. I am the only current member that is not an educator by profession. I feel I bring a different perspective to the Board as a business owner and parent.

3. Do you know the duties you are seeking to accept? How are you the most qualified to complete these duties?

I do know the duties for the position. I have served 2 1/2 terms already. I have attended many board meetings and workshops in the past 10 years. I have also continued my training with the Florida School Board Association. I currently hold the designation of a Certified Board Member

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which requires multiple hours of voluntary training. Our entire Board and Superintendent also have additional training and hold the FSBA distinction of being a Master Board. In addition, I have been to Tallahassee several times to meet with the State Legislature and State Board of Education to advocate for our District. I have also been the Board representative on the Gilchrist County Value Adjustment Board. Finally, I have served as Board Chairman after being elected by my fellow Board members.

4. Do you believe a superintendent of schools should give himself or herself an annual percentage raise beyond the amount set by the Florida Legislature?

I personally do not. If this was an agenda item for our Board, I would vote against. The Florida Legislature sets the salary and the Superintendent knows the salary before running for the job. I feel the salary is fair for the position and see no reason for an increase.

5. Do you believe in banning books from teachers to use in their lesson plans?

If the book is deemed inappropriate by the community or State, then yes. I am all about freedom of speech, but books and literature that go against the moral values of the community should not be allowed in our public schools. There also could be reasons to ban certain books that may be allowed by the community or State that are not age appropriate for certain grades. Our goal in public schools should be to teach students and not indoctrinate them with personal agendas.

6. Why are businesses needing to supplement funding for public schools by giving booster clubs and others money? Why can't taxpayers cover the cost of public education?

First off, the local School Board does not set the local millage rates or control how much the state gives them for funding. Both of these are established by the Florida Legislature. The School Board is told how much they must levy on the local side with only a small portion that is discretionary. The discretionary amount can only be used for capital improvements. Of course, most of these funds are used for salaries, utilities, transportation, maintenance and the other daily needs of keeping the schools up and running. The money that businesses provide for "supplement funding" is used primarily for extracurricular activities. Sports teams and the local FFA programs use the majority of the extra money. The school district does provide basic support of these extracurricular activities. However, the extra money is wanted for better equipment, upgraded travel expenses, increased coaching supplements, upgraded facilities and the list goes on and on. In my opinion, the taxpayers should not have to pay extra for these "wish items" that only some of the students participate in. The taxpayers should only be required to cover the educational needs. This is nothing new as it has been like this since I was in school. I personally have solicited money for my football team or FFA chapter back in the mid 80's. Now as a business owner, I have not only donated money to these many extracurricular activities, but I have also donated my time. I have spent a lot of money on fair projects, sports booster clubs, cake auctions, etc. I do it by choice as I believe in giving back to the community that I love and made me the person I am today. I also believe that supporting our youth is the best investment that we can make in our community.

7. While there is a strong trend for students to become trade-oriented, do you understand the need to have a college-bound academic track in place to keep Florida students in the running to be doctors, lawyers, journalists and other professionals?

I believe our schools should offer curriculums for both paths. In Gilchrist County we do offer both. We have many students that take dual enrollment and actually graduate with an AA degree before they graduate from high school. If their choice is to attend college, they have the

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preparation to attend. This is also evidenced by the number of Bright Futures and other scholarships offered at awards nights every spring before graduations. We also offer paths in nursing, criminal justice, engineering, carpentry and several other career trainings. I do feel we should offer more vocational programs as every student doesn't want to go to college. At the moment there is a need for trade type jobs and people to fill them. Most are well paying and can be obtained without the huge expense of going to a four-year college.

8. Why should I vote for you?

I am the most qualified for the position with almost 10 years of being a board member. My family and I are vested in this community. We all love Gilchrist County and believe in our conservative approach to government. I also am proud of our Schools and their accomplishments. Our District for 2021-2022 is once again an "A" district and ranked #7 in the entire state of Florida. I am humbled to have been a small part of it. I have always felt my position as a school board member is to serve the children, teachers, staff and citizens of Gilchrist County. Your support is appreciated. Thank you and God Bless!

~

William Popp chose to be non-responsive.