

# 2022 HoCo candidate questionnaire

Our Revolution Howard County - county council & executive endorsement requests

Name \*

Liz Walsh

Campaign Website

<https://LizWalshForHoCo.com>

Why are you running for county office? What have you done in recent years to benefit Howard County (e.g. civic engagement, testimony, activism, etc.)?

I am compelled to run for re-election for all the same reasons that brought me here four years ago: a sense—now a firm conviction—that local government must do more now to protect our land and legacy. That incrementalism will not solve already extant signs of climate change, like catastrophic flooding. That the public good cannot be served when our elected officials answer only to land-use profiteers.

What actions would your office take on any of OR's 6 platform issues? <https://ourrev.us/Platform2022>

I support all of them! I am a CEF candidate and have sponsored successful legislation to mandate public disclosure of certain funds received by County Council/Zoning Board members' campaigns as a precondition to us docketing new zoning matters.

As part of the last proposed revisions to the County's Building Code, I sponsored an amendment to require electrification in all new residential construction; that was not successful (this time).

Early in the pandemic, I sponsored a resolution requesting that the State's scheduled roll-out of a minimum wage increase not be deferred. Although I would have preferred we would have passed something more aggressive at the local level, I did support others' bill to incrementally increase certain minimum wage rates. I filed emergency legislation to provide a right-to-recall to hospitality and other service workers laid off during the pandemic; certain colleagues of mine, however, succeeded in stripping that bill of its intended effect before passage.

And I supported several amendments to the recent police accountability task force to enhance the potential involvement and authority of those who are policed. As part of last year's annual budget review, I did my best to determine whether implementation of a State-mandated body worn camera program justified the incredible personnel increases then claimed by both our local police force and prosecutors' office.

Are you using the Citizen's Election Fund (CEF) for financing? If not, why not? Are you accepting campaign contributions from corporate interests, such as property developers or their associates?

Yes I am! Even though no such public financing even existed four years ago, still I took no money then from any developers, LLCs or PACs. And I defeated an incumbent who surely did.

Please identify a few serious challenges facing Howard County that your office would address over the next two years. What steps would you take, what obstacles do you anticipate, and how can we overcome them?

Climate change: I will keep looking for most immediate, meaningful ways to increase tree canopy and reduce impervious surfaces; and ways to incentivize no-mow landscaping, individual solar installations, a gas-powered blower ban and electrifying new construction.

Good governance: I am seriously considering some version of local Inspector General legislation, otherwise strengthening financial and other local ethical disclosure requirements.

In both cases, I expect vociferous opposition from the usual land-use profiteers and those whose campaigns they fund.

What changes would you make to Howard County taxes?

Increasing County taxes is not high on my list right now. We're just about maxed out on what we can charge individuals for income and property taxes. And we've already raised several others in the last three years. I'm way more concerned about whether we're spending what's being collected now on the right sorts of things.

What would you do to make housing more affordable for low-income residents?

Require that it actually be built in as part of ongoing developments, of every kind, throughout the County. Again and again this County—a majority of this current Council I serve on—exempts whole hundreds-homes-big projects from mere minimums. If we continue to accept fees in lieu of providing those affordable housing minimums, we must increase the amount of those fees to reflect the actual costs to site and build that housing elsewhere in the County. We should prioritize more home ownership programming.

I have sponsored legislation to require minimum moderate income housing requirements be provided \*on site\* in mixed-use developments, specifically in transit-oriented zoning districts and in planned golf course communities. I have opposed "luxury" proposals at Doughoregan Manor and Hickory Ridge because of their failure to provide any housing opportunities at all. And I dissented from the recent Erickson/Clarksville zoning approval for reasons that included the insufficiency of the affordable housing opportunities there provided.

How would you improve transportation and reduce traffic congestion in the county in an equitable and sustainable manner? Please identify priorities and funding mechanisms.

We have to de-prioritize our roadways for speeding cars. Easiest would be to complete as many safe walk and bike paths as possible to our public schools and libraries, and then build on from that. We need a bus rapid transit lane on Route 29. We need buses to be electric. Future development should be closely tied to existing transportation, not require more roadways and lanes to get to them.

How would you increase police accountability, decrease racial disparities in policing, and maintain public safety? Do you support a reallocation of resources to medical or social services as front-line responders?

Our law enforcement should mirror as closely as possible the community it polices. I would like to see more done to recruit, train and retain women and Black and Brown officers, both as part of the force and as residents of the communities they police. I would like us to identify every opportunity there is to meet community needs with the most responsive personnel and services, particularly for mental health crises, addiction and homelessness. And for children in our schools. Particularly in our schools, I would rather we employ on site more medical and social services than armed “security” and law enforcement.

How would you engage racially and economically marginalized communities to address equitable community policies? How would you ensure more impacted communities have a voice in county commissions?

Ideally, I am nominating representatives from communities not typically engaged when I am extended that privilege and when a given commission has potential to make a real positive impact. But I am more careful about imposing upon persons those kinds of nominations this many years into my first term given what time commitments may be involved, for what potential benefit to their community. Not so many of us have time to spare.

The pandemic has confirmed two things for me: We need to keep a virtual option for attending, testifying at and serving on any given commission, and archive video of those proceedings. And for important matters—like public health, food insecurity, housing assistance—we have to go out into the relevant communities and engage them ourselves as responsive, responsible local government.

What should county government do to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and job opportunities?

Legislate a living wage. Ensure that County-funded programming like agricultural preservation and economic development target and be distributed among a range of recipients reflective of our community as a whole. Continue supporting Howard Community College, the affordability and accessibility of its programming and its expanding apprenticeships.

Hyper-local farm-to-table-to-compost networks, nursery farming, agri- and eco-tourism, and old Ellicott City all offer potential economic growth opportunity.

What should the county do to improve healthcare beyond what the state and federal government does, in the short-run and long-run?

Healthcare delivery via our public schools (preK through 12) seems like a particularly local undertaking—whether early screening for vision, hearing or learning disabilities, providing mental health supports, administering vaccinations, or serving local farm-to-table foods.

I met recently with CASA about the non-existence here—versus neighboring counties—of prenatal and maternal care for our undocumented families and others of very low income. In the very near term, that care should be funded locally on an annual basis as and until State and federal safety nets fill in.

I am encouraged by the County’s deliberate path to expand in-patient mental health services through its partnership with Sheppard Pratt. I would like a clear-eyed assessment of what count of our local detention center occupants might be better treated as such, and what that should mean in terms of allocation of future spending and space.

Do you support changes to county voting methods, such as ranked choice, approval voting, or proportional representation?

Sure.

What are your top priorities to address environmental justice, sustainability, and nature conservation?

Protecting and putting into preservation as much remaining green and green space as possible.

Do you support eliminating natural gas in new household construction?

Yes!

How would you address electric car recharging stations in the county?

Electric versus gas-powered cars are not a long-term climate solution. I would rather we prioritize now and start building into our neighborhoods alternatives to just roadways for speeding cars: bike, foot, electric bus and light rail. I would rather see local subsidies for e-bikes and free transit than abundant public car recharging stations.

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