

Randy Paul, Green Party Write-In Candidate for Monroe County Commission District 2
Responses to questions from the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce
For the Nov. 3, 2020 General Election

1. Monroe County has taken a leadership role during the COVID-19 pandemic. What are your top priorities for county government as our community balances public health concerns with economic recovery?

I think Monroe County has done an excellent job in protecting all of us from COVID-19. I have had my differences with some of the details (For example, greater enforcement for those people who refuse to wear masks, thus endangering us all) but I have never doubted the good intentions of our county officials. We should all be very proud of our County Health Department and the work they have done.

Where real leadership is needed is how we move forward out of this Pandemic. The old rules of economic development no longer apply. We need to build an economic philosophy and structure that will pull us out of our current economic crisis and build a more equitable society for all our citizens. Ironically this Pandemic has given us a second chance to decide how we want to build a more equitable community, not just economically, but racial and climate justice as well. To do this we need to build a Green society, both in higher paying Green jobs by promoting wind and solar energy, local food distribution for our farmers, and equal opportunities for all people of color. If we do this, and elect leaders who will support these changes, we will see another added benefit: We might actually be able to hand over to our grandkids a planet that will support them.

2. As Monroe County revamps its zoning regulations, how should county government balance its rural and urban character? What principles guide your approach to the county development ordinance (CDO)?

My philosophy on Zoning is simple, and as a result probably controversial. I think we need a “do over” on all the zoning work we have done thus far, both city and county. The reason? All the prior work on zoning did not focus on the two dominant issues of our time: Racial and climate Justice. I firmly believe that we need to look at zoning through a lens of how does it impact racial and climate justice for our community? If it does not move us forward on these two issues, then it needs to be changed.

The only death that is acceptable during this crisis is the death of old ideas and the fear to change.

3. What is your position on the expansion of the Monroe County Convention Center and the continuation of the Food & Beverage Tax?

I have always been against the expansion of the Convention Center, against the Food and Beverage Tax in the past and future. The Convention Center is one example of poor priorities set by both our city and county officials. The investment in the expansion of the Convention should be allocated towards racial and climate justice.

4. The job of county commissioner is considered to be part-time, with a salary of about \$35,000. What changes, if any, would you advocate for regarding the position's time commitments and salary?

Like many in our community I have been an unpaid volunteer my entire adult life. I have spent more than "part time hours" in any advocacy work I have ever done. My work as a Monroe County Library Trustee, the ACLU, Planned Parenthood, work organizing labor unions for library workers at MCPL, and drivers at Bloomington Transit, a vocal advocate for those with disabilities, and my latest work with CASA...all was done without even the thought of be paid or benefiting financially. I have done this while at the same time seeing my financial situation completely destroyed by my huge medical bills that occurred before the Affordable Care Act passed Congress. Health care costs left my wife Linda and I bankrupt and within weeks of being homeless with 6 small children. Luckily with the help of friends, and the Affordable Care Act, my medical expenses are now covered by insurance. I tell you this story to show that Linda and I are not independently wealthy, and you don't have to be in order to give back to the community that offers us all such a great place to live.

So, long story short, I would do the job of County Commissioner as an unpaid volunteer. I think the honor alone would be more than I would need to feel compensated.

As far as pay raises for the commissioners? I would vote against it primarily because the role of commissioner was meant to be part time by our founders. The idea of a "citizen" part time commissioner, and not a professional politician, is worth preserving. The increase in salary of "about \$25,000" quoted in the BEACON last month by my opponent, represents a 70% increase in commissioner salaries! During a Pandemic! This also moves this position to full time status, and away from the idea of a citizen based government. Personally, I like the idea of an elected body made up of our friends and neighbors, who do government's work part time, and then return home to their private lives. I am totally against turning the commissioners into an office filled with full time professional politicians.