

# The People's Voice, LLC

## Ethics Ballot <sup>TM</sup>

3205 B Corporate Court Ellicott City, MD 21042

March 5, 2018

### 2018 Howard County Candidate Questionnaire

#### – County Council

Thank you for taking the time to fill out The People's Voice (TPV) / Ethics Ballot 2018 Candidate Questionnaire which will be used in the TPV endorsement process.

**Publication:** Your answers are considered "on the record." They will be circulated to members and may be published on the [TPV website](#).

**Endorsement Process:** TPV will endorse in several local races for the Primary Election in 2018, and will likely add more races to The Ethics Ballot for the General Election. Go to [www.ethicsballot.com](http://www.ethicsballot.com), "Ethics Ballot" tab, and click on "Criteria/Logos", for further details on endorsement criteria.

Please return questionnaires via email to [ethicsballot@gmail.com](mailto:ethicsballot@gmail.com) by **Monday, March 15, 2018 at 1:00PM**. We will acknowledge receipt of the returned questionnaire. Please email any questions you have and a Board Member will respond.

#### Candidate Information

Name	China Williams
Phone	443-977-0543
Website	chinawilliams.com
Campaign Account Name	Friends of China Williams
Treasurer	Lucie Geinzer
Chairman	n/a
Campaign Manager	n/a
Funds Balance	\$10,000

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### Questionnaire - County Council Candidates

1. Why are you running for this office? What qualifications do you uniquely bring to hold this office?

I'm running to represent the residents who are concerned about adequate school funding, public infrastructure, and responsible growth. I have been advocating for strong public schools since my son started pre-school more than a half a decade ago. I organized a grassroots group of parents to successfully lobby for a new school to replace an ageing un-air conditioned building when my family and I lived in Catonsville. I went on to become the school's PTA president, lobbying for an experienced administration, increased walkability to school, and keeping the school community intact during redistricting. Since moving to Howard County, I've been involved in the campaign for a strong APFO and fully funding the public schools. I'm currently the PTA vice president at Triadelphia Ridge elementary school.

Professionally I'm a travel writer, able to relate easily to foreign cultures and explain complex issues in clear and concise language.

2. Describe why you feel you have a viable campaign.

My platform reaches across party lines and appeals to the majority of the district's residents who moved here for the public schools and for the high quality of life. I have a dedicated team of volunteers, twice monthly door-knocking outings, high-profile social media presence, and an unforgettable name. I also collaborate with the other western Democratic candidates for door knocking, resource sharing, and candidate promotion. I have been endorsed by the Sierra Club and will most likely receive the endorsement of the Ellicott City & Western Howard Democrats club when they vote in April. (I'll keep you updated on the results.)

My funding comes directly from voters in small increments and represents their trust in my ability to look out for them.

3. How do you believe one eliminates the appearance of conflicts regarding campaign contributions?

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I have received no contributions from developers or individuals who work for developers. My contributions come from individuals in small increments and demonstrate my commitment to the residents. Adhering to campaign finance rules and transparency in campaign finance reporting are important ways to eliminate conflicts. It would also be nice if the state reporting system were easier to use for citizens looking to download campaign reports.

4. If you are elected, or reelected, what are your top priorities for 2019?

Top priorities include responsible growth that keeps pace with infrastructure and the county's ability to deliver high quality services, including adequate school capacity and funding; responsible management of environmental resources, including the protection of clean and safe well water; adequate and safe access to roads for commuters, farm vehicles, and for recreational uses such as biking and walking; adequate stormwater management to decrease flooding in Valley Mede and surrounding neighborhoods.

5. How would you have voted on the APFO bills, and the amendments regarding roads tests, affordable housing, capacity limits, and categories to add to APFO? If seeking reelection please discuss your votes and reasons. In 2019, would you sponsor legislation to implement any positions you herein outlined, that differ from current law?

I would have not supported the affordable housing amendment that effectively built in a school-capacity loophole. I would have supported reduced school-capacity thresholds. And I would lobby the state to allow Howard County to raise transfer taxes and impact fees to better fund capital expenditures. Yes, in 2019 I would sponsor legislation that would amend the errors of the current APFO legislation.

6. Did you seek the endorsement of the MD Builders Assn? Did you meet with the MD Builders Assn, wherein you noted how you would vote, or would have voted, on APFO Bills or amendments? If so, what positions did you communicate?

No, I did not seek the endorsement of the MDBA. I did not meet with them.

7. Do you believe the HCPSS budget should have a lower level of increase, or be fully funded? If fully funded, where do you suggest the County budget cut elsewhere to accommodate? If lowered, where do you suggest the HCPSS budget be cut?

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It should be fully funded. Currently HCPSS's operating budget is 52.1% of the county budget with health benefits and debt service adding another 6.1%. If the entire 58.2% went to operating, then our schools would be able to reduce class sizes and maintain important programs, like pre-kindergarten and world languages. I would like to investigate ways to reduce debt-service costs, which have risen in recent years. I would also advocate for one-time spending packages to address deficits so that operating budgets aren't adversely affected.

8. Do you believe developer fees should be increased in the County? Do you believe developers should be allowed to voluntarily pay increased school fees to proceed in closed school districts? If so, at what levels?

Yes, developer impact fees should be increased to represent fair market value and the cost of building new infrastructure to accommodate growth. Due to current budget shortfalls in capital funding, the county might have to consider fees for building in closed school districts. These fees should represent the true cost of adding seats either to existing buildings or building new schools.

9. Do you believe the current annual residential allocations unit maximums are too high, too low, or should be unchanged? If you believe they should be changed are you willing to sponsor legislation in 2019 to do so?

Considering that there is continued pressure on school, road, and health-services capacities, the county's attempts to regulate growth, including allocations units, have not had the desired outcome. Adjusting these levels to better reflect infrastructure and services is important. If possible I would propose relevant legislation and would push for an improved public-input process when allocations are reevaluated during the General Plan in 2020. Complete and unbiased economic input studies, along with adequate public input and education, are necessary components in the process. Thanks to HCCA, The People's Voice, and other citizen advocates, Howard County residents are much better informed. But we have more work to do.

10. Do you believe there should be an increased number of Council Members? If so, how many, and how do you propose they be elected?

District 5 is a large geographical area and comprises a diversity of perspectives and interests. Residents in the far west might feel like their needs are ignored in favor of more populous areas. But I also think that a considerate councilperson can and should effectively manage the diversity of opinions and needs of the district. Comparing our council to other counties', we have a standard proportion for our population. We should also consider the cost of bringing on additional councilpeople, especially as county revenues remain uncertain.

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11. What is your position on TIF's, and specifically the TIF for Downtown Columbia/Howard Hughes? What is your position on how much affordable housing should be required by Howard Hughes (HH) on their own property? Many believe the norm being 10-15%, and HH is providing 4%, discuss.

Public money should not be used to finance private development, especially in a desirable area like Downtown Columbia. TIFs as a redevelopment tool have fallen out of favor in many parts of the country because they overpromise and under-deliver.

12. What do you believe are the best methods to use to provide affordable housing? What do you see as any current difficulties in accomplishing those goals?

Affordable housing should be centered where there is access to transportation, jobs, and services. The challenges are that only certain parts of the county meet these criteria and that economically diverse neighborhoods are key to the success of affordable housing. Western Howard County lacks all three and in areas outside the planned service area, the infrastructure can't support housing density.

13. Do you believe Howard County should be a sanctuary County?

I support the compromise reached by the County Executive after CB-9 failed. Howard County police should only cooperate with ICE in criminal cases. I do not support the use of police resources to check individual's status or to deny them services.

14. Do you support allowing developers to build residences on parkland, whether by swap, gift or purchase?

No I do not support land swaps of parkland.

15. Would you support restricted development in areas that the County has designated as part of the Green Infrastructure Network?

Yes.

16. Are you in favor of implementing the Development Regulations Assessment recommendations? What, if any, suggestions did you make during this process so far?

The Development Regulations Assessment recommendations were primarily logistical and organizational and sought to eliminate redundancies. Their recommendations will make the process easier and less contradictory. My input was critical of the conditional use permits, which provide a loophole for up-zoning. I would also like to see APFO tests applied earlier in the process, perhaps at the planning board or hearing examiner level.

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17. Have you ever testified before the County Council? If so, describe some positions you have taken.

Yes, I have testified for fully funding HCPSS in 2017 and submitted written testimony in 2018. I also testified for a strong APFO and against industrial mulching on farmland in 2017.

18. The Clarion Zoning study showed we have only 1% of land in Howard County in each of B1, B2, M1 and M2. There continues to be a push to place high density residential development. How would you balance the need to retain commercial zoning with the desire for residential development? Are there incentives you would consider to make sure we have enough commercial zoning in the future, as markets change?

A diversified tax base is important for economic stability of the county and the intensification of residential units along Route 1, the county's primary manufacturing zone, concentrates our tax base into one category leaving us vulnerable to boom and bust cycles. Regulating growth so that infrastructure keeps pace can also encourage a diversified revenue stream. Any additional economic diversification incentives need to consider future trends in consumer behavior, employment opportunities, and transportation. Howard County needs to collaborate with Washington, DC, and Baltimore to ensure that it is part of a regional economic growth program.

19. How would you expedite or improve the Ellicott City master plan, or other storm water management requirements/recommendations to further protect that area? Do you believe downtown Ellicott City could be made ADA compliant?

The plans for the Ellicott City watershed are beautiful and will deliver an enhanced old district as a high-profile shopping and entertainment destination. When possible, ADA compliance should be adhered to. I wish that the same care and consideration were being shown for Valley Mede and Chatham, both areas in floodplains that were adversely affected by the 2016 flood. At this point the hydrologic studies for the area have no recommendations for decreasing flooding in the 100-year flood zone along North Chatham Road.

20. Describe positions you have taken, or votes you have made which you feel are the most important with regard to the Council position. Describe how you championed these causes or how you publicized your position. Include information about any votes or positions you have made that you regret, or about which you feel differently.

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Strong APFO and fully funding public schools are the most important positions I've taken as a citizen advocate and as a council candidate. I collaborated with Mobilize HoCo to encourage families upset about redistricting to focus on the root cause of overcrowding: insufficient laws regulating school capacity. I reached out to citizen advocacy groups and leaders, like HCCA and Lisa Markovitz, for information and advice. I use my candidate Facebook page as an information source for citizens who want to be engaged and informed. I am active on Facebook groups that discuss civic issues and I offer or solicit data-driven opinions and information. I still feel strongly that the industrial mulching bill doesn't adequately address health and safety controls but I wish the public debate about the issue was more nuanced and sought common ground. It saddens me to hear the frustrations that the farmers have and I hope that as a council person I can help resolve some of the farmer-residents conflicts.

21. How much time do you think should pass before an elected official, according to Ethics Laws/Regulations, can be compensated by a private company that could have benefited from the decisions of the official?

I don't know the magic number that would deter favorable decision-making by elected officials. There may not be one. Removing the influence of special interest is the responsibility of the voters to hold their elected officials accountable. This would be easier to do if council votes and bills were easier to access and understand and if campaigns weren't dependent upon special-interest money.

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### Supplemental Question:

"Please state your views about CB21 (Mulching Bill) below."

<https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/olis/LegislationDetail.aspx?LegislationID=3016>

### Response:

I live in Western Howard County and am on well and septic. I am especially concerned about the well-established health and safety effects of industrial-scale mulching and composting on groundwater and air quality in an environmentally sensitive area like the west. I support efforts to reduce waste in landfills and the county-owned Alpha Ridge Landfill does an excellent job minimizing contamination in a residential area that has a major risk factor removed by being on municipal water.

CB21 does not contain the health and safety controls needed to expand this activity on to private land. Many strong amendments were proposed during last year's consideration of the original bill but they did not pass. I am encouraged that the bill now contains limitations on combined mulching and composting (allowed only if there is highway access). I would like to see the bill increase setbacks from schools, reduce activity acreage, and provide monitoring and remediation in the case of air and water contamination.

By Authority, The People's Voice PAC, Lisa Markovitz, Treasurer