

# Beverly Bell (D)

**District 6, Incumbent**

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***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

Transportation and land use, Mental Health, Justice Department, and ISU Students. Two of these boards I have been serving for the past 8 months.

***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

Roads, Roads! I have met with Comptroller Susana Mendoza three times she said we have a AAA credit rate for McLean County attracted customers.

I will work tirelessly with The Governor and IDOT to make us more accessible for shoppers.

***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

Give business tax break for hiring youth students all year round. You wouldn't invite a friend to a messy house. So, no junk cars and bulk garbage sitting outside for weeks at a time. Have minor traffic violators work their charges off.

***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

Hiring of local workers (union) will help keep revenue in McLean County. Low-cost grocery in uptown normal for students because of the high cost of travel to Walmart store when most students don't have a car. More foot traffic will produce more impulse buying.

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

Yes! The three city blocks of Main St in Bloomington to become a people friendly zone- with parking on side streets, small trees and water fountains, grocery store in or near the old Osco with delivery service only to that area. Use of TIP money to aid building owners to make apartments out of unused spaces.

# Steve Harsh (R)

## District 4

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### ***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

- 1) Public Safety: Police and Fire Protection, well maintained streets, roads, water, and sewer.
- 2) Economic Progress: A healthy, and robust Community.
- 3) Government Accountability: Full disclosure of all Revenue from all sources, Full disclosure of all spending in all areas, and Full disclosure of all votes on all issues to all Radio and TV Media, Internet, and social media.

### ***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

Our greatest challenge will be keeping our Largest Private Employers, as well as our small employers, in McLean County. We need a Tax and Regulation Structure that is the envy of the Midwest, and a Responsible Government willing to operate under that structure.

### ***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

The Business Community needs to know you are an advocate for their 2 most important needs, lower Taxes, and less Regulation, to be their friend.

### ***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

It would suggest to me that if we have to continuously give boat loads of Tax Incentives to attract and retain business, that our Tax structure might be too high. If we remove that Tax and Regulation noose around the neck of business, and become more competitive than our neighbors, we will have an economic explosion.

### ***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

A Community this size, needs more entertainment and activity options available from youth to retired. The business community would jump on it if it made economic sense. Here again, Taxes, Fees, and Regulations can become deal killers.

# Ross Webb (R)

## District 10

[Campaign Website](#)

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### ***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

Support strong economic growth, keep our community safe by supporting our local law enforcement and ensure each taxpayer dollar is spent with extreme prudence.

### ***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

Creeping increasing property taxes. With the increase of property values in the community, we risk pricing out the middle class, to combat this we need to watch every penny spent and be a strong advocate for the taxpayer.

### ***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

Listen when the business community speaks. As a small business manager and former small business owner that employed over 100 people in our community, I know the frustration red tape makes for job creation and growth. I want to streamline business in McLean County.

### ***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

Fight for holding the line on property taxes, try to cut red tape on zoning issues and engage in aggressive tax incentives to attract major employers.

### ***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

I would like to see our local business leaders be more vocal on the political issues that affect their ability thrive in our community.

# George O. Wendt (R)

**District 3, Incumbent**

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***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

Keep the tax rate at its current rate or lower.

***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

The nursing home. Keep salaries competitive.

***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

Yes

***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

Keeping taxes low.

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

*Not Answered*

# Elizabeth Johnston (D)

***District 5, Incumbent***

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***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

Since my election in 2018, I have served on 5 of the original 7 committees and currently serve as Vice-Chair of Property and on the Executive committee. Between my present roles and my time also spent on Health, Transportation, and Land Use, these committees have given me a strong awareness of County operations. My main priority is to facilitate a sustainable and thriving community through county services, initiatives, as well as innovative solutions to create budgetary efficiencies for keeping the county portion of property taxes low. Our county provides services that ensure safety, security, and quality of life through our 27 departments from our Law & Justice Center and Animal Control to Restaurant inspections and Community Health to our recreation facilities of COMLARA Park and maintaining the jewel of Downtown Bloomington- the McLean County History Museum. County initiatives that are beneficial in creating a thriving community range from supporting our Economic Development Council, sustaining local businesses with forgivable loans during the pandemic, creating Economic Development Zones for favorable new business establishment/expansion, intergovernmental agreements that create a cohesive community for addressing issues, to workforce training for our expanding business community. At the county we are working on multiple projects to decrease future costs from electricity efficiency and establishment of a plan that reduces additional spending due to excessively deferred maintenance.

***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

One of the most pressing issues facing McLean County government is the same issue facing many local businesses. We are having some difficulty finding qualified employees in many departments due to lower compensation and benefits compared to the private sector. This is a persistent issue that existed, but has been exacerbated, by the pandemic and we have not made sufficient changes in the wake of our community' recent economic development. An upcoming salary survey will be released by the end of the year, and I expect the compensation packages for county employees will require adjustments. Providing appropriate compensation without raising taxes on the community is our most critical financial challenge. Keeping in mind that service provision is the fundamental role of local government and cannot be achieved without adequate staff, I will work to strike that balance between maintaining staff without raising our tax rate. Possible solutions will vary depending on the results of the study and may include

expanding grant applications for county programs, decreasing other costs as mentioned previously through appropriate maintenance and efficiencies, or increasing service fees at point-of-service.

***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

I find the best way to encourage cooperation and unification is through communication. I would love to see opportunities for the County to partner with local business leaders for their feedback and guidance on key initiatives. One area to consider is a collaboration on developing a County and local purchasing policy with guidance on keeping local and regional dollars here as much as possible. I am grateful for the newsletters and events hosted by the Chamber as I feel they play a pivotal role in connecting business and community leaders.

***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

I see the County's role in attracting and retaining businesses as well as supporting development is to maintain essential infrastructure, provide efficient services, and create a stable economic environment with reliable, low tax rates. It is also essential that we continue to financially support and work with the EDC to address business needs across McLean County. We have demonstrated a long history of partnership and a willingness to support economic development tools.

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

The most pressing need facing our businesses is the lack of housing and employees. The housing need directly impacts our employee pool. I fear it is a deterrent for potential applicants considering a move to our community- living in hotels for months on end is not ideal or desirable. In addition, the rapidly rising price of housing due to low supply is driving many potential employees out of the region. Therefore, I would love to see the business community supporting efforts to attract housing development projects to balance the job growth we have seen over the last 4-5 years as quickly as possible.

# Chuck Erickson (R)

***District 10, Incumbent***

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## ***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

I am on the county board. Look at what I have done not just what I say. So, this is written from the perspective of we or I as I am presently a county board member.

1. Economic Growth. I voted in favor of the Rivian and Brandt incentives. Incentives are not no brainers and I have always insisted on provisions that before the business gets the incentives, it must meet certain hiring goals, for example. These provisions are sometimes called clawback provisions and I insist on them. I am proud of my vote for these incentives.

2. Responsible Government Spending. We funded and are funding the new jail and the mental health initiative. In the last 11 years of which I have been a member, we have kept the tax levy small. I have been an advocate for the taxpayer while supporting limited and efficient government. We have balanced priorities. I have never voted in favor of a tax increase. Maintaining the proper role of government while keeping taxes low will continue to be a priority to me. That doesn't mean we have been stingy. But we spend appropriately.

3. Individuals - I have on occasion had to lead the fight on matters before the board. For example, I led the fight for a special ag tourism designation when I was chair of the Land Use Committee. Small business needs to flourish. We need to make government work for us and not against us. Additionally, a gentleman once petitioned the board for a zoning change to build a boat repair facility. He lost on the vote for a full change. I approached him and his attorney after the meeting and I advised them that they need to pursue this differently. They needed to pursue a variance. I spoke with our legal department. I helped put the two sides together to get this done. Helping a small businessman navigate county government is a priority of mine.

## ***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

Taxes - As property values continue to increase in McLean County, the assessed value of homes increase. Our budget went up over the last 11 years approximately 35 million dollars while we kept the levy nearly the same as it was 11 years ago. We can provide adequate government without property tax levy increases. We need to be vigilant in being good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Economic Growth - We have to continue to look for opportunities to bring new businesses to our community. We have to be wise about it but we know the county government has been equal partner in growth in McLean County.

***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

Well, I have already done this on an individual basis as previously stated. We are here to help small businesses, not hurt them. We are here to make government work for us, not against us. These are not words I utter. These are actions I have taken. Going forward, where I can help individually, I have and where I can help collectively I will. I love McLean County and believe it is worth fighting for. I have supported initiatives with the EDC to work together with other units of government to provide incentives. I will continue to support these collaborative efforts when I believe they make economic sense.

***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

Well, when Covid hit, I reached across the aisle to work with a Democrat to provide \$10,000 grants to small businesses. We worked with the EDC to get the word out. I have supported incentives for Rivian and Brandt when I felt they had sufficient teeth to make them meet benchmarks before getting the incentives. In fact, we have denied incentives when the benchmarks were not met.

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

I want to see McLean County continue to be a beacon of how county government can run efficiently while attracting new businesses to our community. But in doing so, we must not forget those small business owners that presently already reside here. To be clear, other candidates will talk about what they would like to do. I say don't look at what they say, but what they do. Look at my record. I do, I don't just talk. I have been a friend to business growth ever since serving on the McLean County Board. I have been a member of the McLean County Chamber of Commerce for a long time and financially support this PAC. I apologize for any typographical errors.

# John D. McIntyre (R)

***District 5, Incumbent***

[Campaign Facebook](#)

***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

1. budget balance
2. conservative property tax rate
3. infrastructure & services including continued growth and enhancement in mental health services
4. support business expansion providing enhanced EAV

***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

Workforce retention for our county. We are currently completing a salary study to provide equity and improved wages for all our county employees. Also, we are making a constant effort to adjust our expenditures to meet the challenges presented to us by the variable changes each year in state grants and mandates. We have excelled in providing services within our means during some challenging times.

***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

I am constantly working with the business community to find ways for incentives to not only bring in new companies, but to also help the local businesses sustain. County Gov't. has worked with EDC to provide additional loan free grants to small businesses.

***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

As Chairman of the County Board and a member of the Economic Development Council Board, I have been personally involved with efforts to provide incentives to help bring in new corporations. Recently, we have stepped up efforts to expand services to outlying rural community businesses. I have been a participant in the "One Voice" trip for many times and will continue to support local efforts to expand programs, facilities, and training to provide specific skills much needed for local manufacturing.

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

Support of and revitalization and creation of new businesses by using existing vacant building, facilities, and real estate.

# Corey Beirne (D)

## District 10

### [Campaign Website](#)

#### ***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

- 1.) To work to improve the lives of marginalized populations in McLean County.
- 2.) To ensure that I represent ALL constituents in D10 with fairness and respect.
- 3.) To execute votes and initiatives based on facts and research while working to take advantage of the unique environment in which McLean County finds itself.

#### ***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

I believe that McLean County faces a unique and challenging environment with the recent arrival and growth of Rivian and Ferraro, but one with potential for large scale benefit as well. I believe the challenges resulting from these developments, housing, and labor, present us with unique opportunities for generational change and growth. I look forward to working with local businesses, large and small, in identifying their needs and developing solutions that can lead to growth and mutual success.

#### ***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

Growth doesn't happen by accident; it is driven by data and numbers. I would seek out needs among stakeholders, gather data, and look for opportunities for collaboration. The current environment is ripe for significant growth, so I'd look forward to asking business owners "What's the craziest thing on your wish list and what do you need to make it happen?" then connecting them with other bold thinkers.

Local government should be an able and willing partner, not a roadblock who operates one way because that's how it's always been done.

#### ***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

I WILL BE THE BIGGEST DAMN CHEERLEADER FOR YOUR BUSINESS. I will work to connect the wealth of resources we have in our community, from finance, to government, to organized labor in such a manner that benefits all stakeholders. The potential for growth is enormous and it will take bold action and strong advocacy, but I'm here for it and believe that our local businesses of all sizes can both help with and benefit from the opportunities now present.

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

I would love to see local business involve themselves with the outstanding local schools in McLean County. Partnership potential exists at every age level, both in higher education and at the K-12 level. It is an untapped well and could benefit local businesses as well as students.

# Lea Cline (D)

**District 8, Incumbent**  
[Campaign Facebook](#)

## ***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

Our county is seeing exciting growth amid fiscal stress nationally. We must resist the urge to shrink, and we must remain future focused, for our current businesses, future entrepreneurs, and the families that they raise here. The services that the county provides are critical to this growth, so are our employees. We are losing experienced staff and not having success in replacing them. We are awaiting the results of an analysis of County salaries and how we can improve working conditions. Improvement in this area is a top priority. Lastly, I am going to remain focused on making sure that wind and solar projects seeking permits in our county benefit our county--hiring local workers, being responsible in their engagements with residents, and meeting their commitments (repairing roads, etc) at all stages of their construction and use.

## ***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

Growth is good but it also presents challenges in terms of housing, labor, and equity. As a county government, our most important role is to make sure that the services we provide--roads, permitting, inspections--keep improving. Doing our job right means that the community is attractive to outside investment and fertile for growth in our current business community. I will always advocate for new businesses and new construction to hire locally, or to permanently relocate workers. We want salaries to stay with McLean County families and for those salaries to be spent locally. Housing this labor force is a critical problem right now. In my district, we have seen smaller homes sell quickly and older homes get remodeled. This has helped the district (and local trades) but it has also caused a real crisis for lower income renters. We must continue to look for ways to make sure that all residents experience the positive side of growth and don't feel pinched out of their own community.

## ***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

During the pandemic, the County Board made whatever grant money/forgivable loans we could be available to businesses in the community to help them weather the shutdowns. Our Health Department did herculean work to provide testing and vaccines, helping to make sure that employers had access to free testing for employees (keeping essential workers on the job). From my point of view, the County (as an entity and through the EDC) already has a good working

relationship with local businesses. But our essential function is to make sure that we do our job so you can do your job. I will always encourage communication between the two entities -- something that is improving now that we are approaching a "normal" life again.

***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

As I said above, I think the most important role that the County plays is making sure that we are doing our job well. We serve the citizens of the County, both businesses and individuals. A functioning government makes business easier. So, plainly speaking, I don't think that it is my role to attract business. It is my role to make sure that the ground is fertile for growth and to ensure that our staff provides appropriate services to the businesses when needed (inspections, permits, etc).

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

I understand the desire to build high-end rental properties. But I think that there is a huge market for moderately priced rental properties. There are a number of locations that could be rehabilitated for this purpose, but it will require investment. In my district, we have a lot of the low-wage earners (cooks, waitresses, home health aides) that make businesses run. We have to provide them a place in our plans for the future.

# Faye Freeman-Smith (D)

## District 3

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### ***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

1. Expand Mental Health access and services and resources.
2. Supporting working families with prevailing wages & a trained workforce.
3. Safeguard fiscally responsible & collaborative decision making among community leaders.

### ***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

Due to COVID we have been overwhelmed in all sectors of our local economies; Small and Large Businesses; Education, Healthcare, etc. As a result, a lot of uncertainty surrounds the strength and pace of economic growth among these sectors.

Problem: Inflation

1. The largest risk facing the county's economics in the coming year is the policies of the Federal Reserve with regards to managing inflation.

Possible Solution: With fears of a new recession and financial collapse, times like these call for resilient, inclusive, and strong leadership in Education healthcare, business, and wider society. Immediate relief measures need to be implemented and adjusted for those that may fall through the cracks. Medium, and longer-term planning is needed to re-balance and re-energize our local the economy following this crisis.

Problem: Labor Shortages

2. While job growth continues to be very strong, the issue is a tight labor supply, resulting in the recent largest increase in wages recorded over a 20-year period. These wage hikes are contributing to rising input costs causing businesses to raise output prices, feeding the current inflation rate. If this imbalance persists, it will hurt productivity and, over time, undermine local economic growth.

Possible solutions: Increase support of programs to accelerate training of at-risk youths and adults for careers that allow them to fill current job openings with the hope of having careers that ensure enough income to plan for a brighter future for self and family. This not only reduces the pressure to increase wages, but it also increases the number of people in the workforce paying taxes which increases the tax base to support our governmental initiatives. Concurrently, we should increase small businesses access to credit and stimulus funding. Help small businesses make the transition to the next normal. Support efforts to help small

businesses expand.

Problem: Supply chain problems

3. Supply chain problems now and in the future can hurt the local economy by decreasing supplies and thereby escalating the cost of goods.

Possible Solutions: Businesses can partner with and/or learn from Amazon, Walmart and other large digital players that are building best-in-class distribution networks. As all businesses have better supply chain processes, they will be able to offer more diverse products because they have removed hurdles of limitations of technology or supply chain processes.

A broad socioeconomic development plan including sector by sector plans and an ecosystem that encourages entrepreneurship is also needed so that those with robust and sustainable business models can flourish.

***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

I will promote community-friendly policies that help both community members, public entities, and businesses. I will advocate for community friendly policies that promote sustainable collaborations between businesses and community individuals such as community members supporting local business by shopping locally, and businesses supporting the community by getting supplies from local suppliers (ex. restaurants getting food from local farmers). Policies must help all community members have their basic needs met. I support such government incentive programs as Block grants, small business loans, and other like programs to help businesses expand and grow.

***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

I will advocate for and assist with initiatives and programs that promotes economic development, diversity, and inclusion throughout our community. We need to activate our economic program networks with large and small businesses and the public entities (governmental, non-profit, and educational) all contributing from their diverse perspectives.

I propose a 1.5-day annual conference with representatives for all key sectors to share and learn from each other. I see sessions describing successes achieved in the past year. Working committees reporting on their conclusions to the representatives. Then at the conclusion of the conference, a way to name the top 3 county initiatives for our community to work on together in the coming year.

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

Increased minority business ownership in McLean County.

Establish more public-private initiatives especially where better infrastructure or policy is needed. Such endeavors require the working together of many sectors of our county. I believe we are Better Together and the more of such endeavors we explore the better, more innovative, and more comprehensive solutions will be identified and implemented.

# Susan Schafer (R)

***District 9, Incumbent***

[Campaign Facebook](#)

***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

1. My top priority is to continue to work towards needed systemic changes to the behavioral health system in McLean County. Highlighted by the National Association of Counties (NACo) Leader Profile and a member of the initial cohort of Leadership Network, this work is critical to improving the lives of all McLean County residents.
2. McLean County Government has a long history of maintaining a strong financial position. The county focuses on long-term view which has resulted in McLean County being seen as a downstate role model. It is very important to not lose sight of ensuring we continue to maintain our ability to provide services while not compromising our financial strengths.
3. The ability to attract and retain a strong, diverse workforce for county departments to maintain county services that residents expect balanced with being a good steward of taxpayer dollars.

***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

When speaking of the County as a whole, I believe housing is most critical currently. There are really no fast, easy solutions. When possible, remove and/or revise some of the barriers that slow down the development processes. Another suggestion is to create incentives like pay for performance or bonuses like those used for road projects to encourage development for all types of housing.

***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

Based on my time on the board, there has been good cooperation between County government and the business community and will advocate for continued collaboration on common issues.

***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

Continue to utilize tools such as the Enterprise Zone, standardized incentives, and the McLean County revolving loan program.

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

Supporting and encouraging employees to attend the annual Community Behavioral Health Forum. This is the 5th year and will be held on October 4 at Marriott Hotel and Conference Center. Free admission, free parking. This is an educational event for the entire community with topics ranging from Youth, Adults, Law and Justice, Emerging Trends, Resilience, and more. Follow McLean County Behavioral Health Coordinating Council on Facebook for more information.

# Don Crop (R)

*District 7*

[Campaign Facebook](#)

***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

Public safety, accountability, economic growth

***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

Spending money wisely. Spend on critical things first and ensure value for the expenditure.

***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

Soliciting their input on what their needs are and seeing if those can be accommodated.

***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

Be accessible. Be receptive to ideas. Keep vigilant to opportunities to induce business relocation to McLean County.

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

Not at the present time.

# Adam Reeves (R)

## *District 1*

### ***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

Keeping the extremists from damaging the community, trying to keep regulations to a minimum, trying to keep the Debt load down not to burden the taxpayers

### ***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

Public Safety, making sure the police are funded to keep everyone safe.

### ***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

Involve the heads of industry and ask them what they need from us.

### ***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

I believe that my prior comments will allow that.

### ***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

*Not Answered*

# **Jerry Klinkner (R)**

## **District 4**

### ***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

1. Find out why there are business staffing shortages. Discover and implement solutions to this problem.
2. Start a committee to determine the effects that inflation is having on our community. Determine if there are ways the county board can help ameliorate this problem.
3. Evaluate and provide support/treatment for those whose mental health has deteriorated due to the covid lockdowns.

### ***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

Business staffing shortages and the small businesses that had to close due to the covid lockdowns are two of the most critical economic challenges that the County is facing. A committee should be formed to investigate possible solutions. Perhaps a reduction or elimination of county taxes for the first year back in operation would be a helpful incentive for businesses that had to close.

### ***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

I would start by interviewing small business owners to see what they need most from the County to keep in business and grow stronger. I would also invite small business owners to observe the Board meetings.

### ***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

I would propose a business advisory board composed of business owners who could meet regularly to advise the board on what would aid business growth and expansion.

### ***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

None at this point.

# Ben Webb (D)

## District 7

### [Campaign Website](#)

#### ***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

Stability and sustainability post-pandemic, growing local economy and ensuring growth of local business, develop draw for new business and partnerships which will reinforce our current ecosystem and bring in new jobs as more industries are attracted to our region.

#### ***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

I think the most critical challenge for the County is to be responsible stewards of the tax dollars brought in by the county. Ensuring new business and partnerships with the current economy needs to be sustainable and not at the expense of local business on the dime of working families.

#### ***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

It should be a priority of the next board to coordinate and find methods to overlap the values of the business community looking to hire and the County government looking to develop a thriving community.

#### ***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the County, both with existing business as well as attracting new commerce?***

As a business outsider, I will remain open to those that know better and learn from your membership and the voice of our county businesses. As an educator, I work best when I can bring diverse partners together to find a mutual benefit for all.

#### ***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

Please attend as many committee meetings as practical. The work of county government really is done in committee so I am seeing involvement at finance committee, and such will be helpful in developing the unification and cooperation you mentioned earlier.

# Jack H. Abraham (D)

## District 6

[Campaign Facebook](#)

### ***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

Creating a more accessible McLean County government, Workers' Rights, Mental Health accessibility

### ***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

Defining the most critical financial challenges that face our County is a multifaceted question. I believe the most pressing issue for economic growth and development is the lack of housing in our areas. Earlier this year, the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council released a study regarding housing within our community. The study found that we are critically under-housed. With the recent business developments that have occurred in our County, it is important to ensure that the workers of these companies are respected and have viable living spaces within our area. Creating more housing will benefit our community as a whole, creating more jobs for the workers of these projects, increased higher development housing, and creating living spaces for the increased workforce that has come to McLean County.

### ***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

Part of my campaign is to create a more accessible McLean County Board; this does not stop at individuals. Having good communication between the business community and our County Board is vital to the success of our County. Our community within McLean County must strive to work together for the greater good of our area. We can do this by making County Board meetings easier to attend, by spreading information about what our County Board is doing, and by encouraging the people of our County to get further involved with our local government. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Economic Development Council created the Forgivable Recovery Loan and the Forgivable Micro-Bridge Loan. Practices like these encourage local businesses to become involved with local politics. We must continue to advocate for the businesses of McLean County. We are all in this together!

### ***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the***

According to the McLean County government website, we currently have six tax abatements provide to the following companies: Brandt Industries, Foundry Square, LLC, Haney Plumbing & Rental, Mid-City Properties, LLC, Rivian

Automotive, and State Farm Insurance. While I am not for unsubstantiated tax subsidies, I do believe that to be competitive within our area, we must welcome new businesses with open arms. Creating a competitive market for our surrounding areas will drive new business to our area, which we can then use to help our community as a whole through job creation or increased government revenue. We must also advocate on the behalf of local existing businesses. District six encompasses Uptown Normal, which is home to countless local businesses; keeping local businesses healthy will prove vital to our community. We can do this through various methods. I mentioned the loans created by the Economic Development Council, loans like these help small businesses thrive; we must continue creating helpful resources for the businesses of our community to benefit from.

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

Yes! Nothing is isolated in our community, our local government works with businesses and individuals, our businesses provide for our community, we must create an environment within McLean County that supports one another. I would love to see the business community get more involved with all of McLean County like our local housing shortages, our local governments, or local educational facilities like ISU or IWU. Our community must remain united.

# Catherine Metsker (R)

## *District 1, Incumbent*

### ***If elected to the County Board, what are your three main priorities?***

I believe McLean County's top priority is the people it serves. Analyzing all tax sources to meet public needs is critical to this priority. These tax monies must ensure the public entities run smoothly and accomplish the stated goals. The McLean County Budget allocations should represent the needs of our citizens while being prudent with the taxes paid by our citizens. Priorities are set and the budget is created by the county board with input from county administration. It is very important to for a county board member to focus on current needs while taking into account the long-term impact of spending decisions. Mental Health efforts and the Court System project are top priorities for McLean County. Although the costs for these efforts are quite high, both will provide needed services to our citizens. The retention of valuable county employees and attracting quality candidates for county job openings is another important priority. A salary structure review was conducted, and the outcome requires additional monies to the salary budget.

### ***What do you believe is the most critical economic/financial challenge the County is currently facing? What are some possible solutions?***

The costs of mental health efforts and the court system project are expensive, but there is a great need for both. A small sales tax is collected from the City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal to provide additional revenue for these priorities. Maintaining and attracting a quality skilled workforce is a fundamental important. The salary structure review is completed. Wage adjustments and increases are necessary. Adjusting other budget line items should provide the additional needed revenue.

### ***How will you encourage greater cooperation and unification between County government and the business community?***

Cooperation and unification between McLean County Government and the business community has been positive. Maintaining broad, constant, straight forward communication between all parties is essential and must continue.

### ***How will you seek to advocate for business growth and expansion across the***

Attracting new commerce requires quality affordable housing. Development seems to focus on Bloomington and Normal. However, aiding small rural communities with development would provide lower cost of living, improved safety, and a greater sense of community for future businesses and residents.

Rural communities in McLean County would benefit from improved infrastructure (streets, water, waste, high speed internet).

***Are there any projects or issues that you would like to see the business community more engaged in?***

Rural broadband is lacking in many parts of McLean County. Rural broadband with high-speed internet would help current residents and encourage future development.