



MCCC 2014 Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Hans Riemer

Email: hans.riemer@hansriemer.com **Campaign Website:** hansriemer.com

Office you are seeking: County Council **District:** At-Large

Years of residence in the district in which you are running: 8

Education Information

College, Post-graduate, Technical School or Certificate Program you completed and the degree(s) you attained.

UC Santa Cruz 1995

Employment Information

Current Occupation: At-large County Councilmember **Current Employer:** Montgomery County

How long have you been employed here? 3 years

If less than two years, please provide immediate previous employer:

Questions

In your opinion, what are the key issues facing the business community in the district/county/state you seek to represent?

On one level, our county's businesses face the same issues as others around the nation: meeting payroll, earning profits and competing successfully with their rivals. But our businesses face an additional hurdle given the state's posture to our county. The state controls most forms of taxes and many critical layers of regulation. The state also views our county as a prime source of revenue for other jurisdictions that have smaller tax bases. Over the past term, the state has passed down an onerous shift of pension responsibilities; instituted an income tax hike of which our county residents and businesses will pay more than 40%; and continued aid policies that channel education and construction funds away from us and towards our neighbors. While I have been working with our local business community to enhance county policies to help us compete, we all have a responsibility to work together for a better deal from the state.

What do you believe are the core responsibilities of the position you seek and what will you do to carry these out?

The key responsibilities of a County Council Member are authoring and voting on legislation, deciding budgets, deciding land use, constituent service and advocating for the interests of the county and its residents. I have a long record of acting both responsibly and decisively in implementing my responsibilities as I will detail below.

Please explain your budget priorities and describe your approach to the role you will play in impacting the County/State budget.

The budget process is all about balancing needs, almost all of which are legitimate. In the past, I have focused on restoring funding for libraries, increasing funding for the county's Earned Income Tax Credit, providing money for health care services for the uninsured, and adding more money for Working Parents Assistance (to help pay for child care), among other priorities. This year, I am supporting a record increase in local money for school construction. I am still reviewing the Executive's proposed budget and assessing where I would like to make changes in the council's final budget. Education must continue to be the highest priority, and I think we should fund as much as we can of the BOE's budget request for MCPS.

What improvements do you believe are needed to the transportation infrastructure In Montgomery County and Maryland? Please list them in your priority order.

I support the Purple Line, the Corridor Cities Transitway and the county's proposed BRT system. I feel so strongly about the need to get these projects built that I helped the Sierra Club, the Coalition for Smarter Growth and certain partners in the business community organize the Get Maryland Moving campaign, which successfully won a state transportation funding increase. I successfully fought an effort by the administration to delay funding for the South Bethesda Purple Line Metro entrance. I voted for expansion of Capital Bikeshare. We should also focus on smaller projects that facilitate walking and bicycling. In this year's capital budget, I am proposing funding for pedestrian and bicycle improvements in areas with large numbers of walkers and bicyclists as well as streetscaping.

If elected, how do you plan to address the perception and reality of Montgomery County and Maryland having a less competitive business climate?

Economic development is a central part of my record and agenda on the council. My very first bill changed the time at which impact taxes are levied from building permit to occupancy or one year out from building permit, whichever is earlier. I was able to pass this bill over significant opposition by working closely with the Maryland-National Capital Building Industry Association. I believed this was important because it helps builders pay for impact taxes on their developments. Critics alleged this would decrease impact tax revenues, but in fact, they went UP after the law was passed. I then passed a bill to require our county to draft an economic development strategy that would govern how we use business incentives. Even though we spend millions every year on economic development, we never had an actual plan for how to do it. (Imagine running a business with no business plan.) The Department of Economic Development has released a draft plan and is now working on a final version. I wrote and passed a county tax credit for cybersecurity companies. This is a growing industry in which we have a competitive advantage and I would like to see our state – and especially our county – lock it up. I expect this tax credit to complement our new National Cybersecurity Center of Excellence. I spearheaded a county initiative to enhance our Night-Time Economy. This is an important priority in attracting new residents, generating amenities for existing residents, attracting and retaining business and enhancing property values. And I am very concerned about the county's performance on approving record plats. We take MUCH longer to do this than our neighbors and it is a major impediment to our real estate industry. I proposed legislation to make progress on this problem and I will be working on it in coming months. I view economic development and regional competitiveness as a permanent and critical task of local government. As long as I am in elected office, I will pursue it aggressively.

How do you define economic development?

Economic development is a continuing process through which a community improves its health and well being by growing the number of high quality jobs that support the families that live in that community.

What role should government play to help attract, grow and retain business?

I outlined my record on economic development in the answer to Question 14 above. Going forward, the key task for county government is to lay down the foundation for private sector job creation. Reforming duplicative bureaucracy (as my record plat bill seeks to do) and balancing budget priorities with reasonable taxation levels are important. But the most important thing the county can do is take advantage of opportunities for new development in our downtowns and around our transit stations. I voted for five master plans (Glenmont, Chevy Chase Lake, Takoma-Langley, Long Branch and Wheaton) that together called for more than 15,000 housing units and over two million square feet of commercial space to be built near Metro or Purple Line stations. I have pushed for more transit-oriented master plans to be included on Park and Planning's work schedule including a critical one to update the plan for the Bethesda Central Business District. We must seize these opportunities or we will be left behind.

What current economic development initiatives do you support?

What new economic development initiatives would you propose?

Please use this opportunity to provide any other information you would like MCCC members to know.