

Bloomington City Council, District 3

Allison Chopra (D)
Mike Satterfield (D)
Martin Spechler (D)

1) What are your qualifications for the office you are seeking?

CHOPRA: As a downtown business owner for six years, I have first-hand experience with the local economy, parking issues and employment. I also served on the board of the Bloomington Urban Enterprise Association. That experience led to my interest in serving on the City Council. Through it, I gained an appreciation for the responsibility of being a good steward of taxpayer dollars. In addition, I have completed the Bloomington Citizen's Academy and Leadership Bloomington Monroe County. These programs have widened my awareness of local government and non-profit agencies. I have also been attending City Council meetings for the last year.

SATTERFIELD: From a technical side, the required qualifications are that one is a registered voter in the district one seeks to represent and that the candidate has met necessary filing deadlines. I believe that aside from the technical requirements, it is valuable to highlight the fact that the qualified candidate is simply someone who votes, someone who cares and someone that is willing to listen to and represent the other voices in our community. I meet these requirements.

SPECHLER: As a moderate Democrat I have served on the Jack Hopkins Social Service committee granting more than \$260,000 annually to many local charities. I am trying to visit them all. Our Sidewalk Committee has funded walkways after site visits and careful safety assessments.

City Council is an "anytime" job. Many meetings occur during business hours, so I teach only one IU course a semester to be available at any time. I also walk my District nearly every afternoon to discover problems and listen to constituents.

Thirty year resident of District 3. Long-time Democratic Central Committee member and elected delegate.

2) What approaches will you take to manage economic growth downtown?

CHOPRA: Businesses who develop in the city should be held to a very high standard when being considered for tax abatements. These abatements should be used to incentivize the business to include things that we, as a community, value such as environmental sustainability, living wages, green spaces, and opportunities for all of our neighbors to have decent housing.

SATTERFIELD: Many parties have interest in managing downtown economic growth and each carry their own priorities. I believe what distinguishes Bloomington from other cities in our state and works well for us is our attractive atmosphere, great but competitive products and

services whether dining, merchandise, housing or technologies and attractive wages. Citizens, city departments, development leaders and legislators shape the shift in priorities. While my primary concerns are housing population diversity as well as business diversity, I will always turn to citizens, business leaders, and colleagues as well as city staff for input on whatever process is driving change.

It is imperative that we protect what we have including access for those who don't live downtown. For them it's a destination. With the abundance of housing in this area, we have more automobiles to manage. We must plan for new business ventures. For better or worse economic trends affect small business owners quickly. Even on personal property, codes and law shape potential changes to a spot of land. While we're protecting what we have, we're obligated to anticipate the future.

SPECHLER: I prefer more middle-age and senior residents downtown; design of new apartments can favor a better demographic balance. Off-street parking and more green space must be adequate to attract them. New buildings must conform to zoning guidelines and suit the surroundings, especially near the University on Kirkwood. To avoid congestion and pollution, food trucks should be allowed in designated lots, for special events, and away from established restaurants.

I oppose tax abatements for new residential or commercial properties unless they add significant numbers of new jobs and/or provide affordable housing. Abatements without these benefits make existing taxpayers pay more.

I would like to see the Convention Center expanded and a new hotel erected opposite it in the present parking lot. These additions would provide new entry level jobs for the unemployed, the handicapped, and ex-offenders trying to make their way into the mainstream of community life.

As a social liberal, I welcome everyone to our diverse city-- Christian, Jew, or Muslim; Afro, Latino, or Asian; straight, LGT, or bi; Libertarian or even Republican. Rehabilitating existing houses and apartments, rather than concentrated projects, would settle diverse new residents of all types throughout the City.

3) What will you do to ensure transparency and accountability in city government?

CHOPRA: It is important to stay connected with constituents, and not just those who are already actively involved in the process. I will personally employ two methods to address this. First, I will hold regular, monthly meetings with District 3 residents. Second, I will randomly reach out to constituents to ask how they think things are going and what concerns they may have.

On a broader level, I will thoroughly scrutinize each issue that comes before the council. I will ask questions and dig deeper into matters when it is required.

SATTERFIELD: All employees of City departments including the legislative side should maintain official communications on information retrieval systems that are maintained or contracted officially. Email is not the only means to store information. Whatever the system used

it must be capable and configured for reasonable searches. Accountability will follow easily enough. In any case however, accountability should not have an undue negative impact on productivity.

I believe the next administration should review current policy and procedure with an eye to transparency and productivity. Much of this falls to the executive. A change in administration creates the right space to lose touch with important rules and procedures. I will monitor accountability to the extent a legislator in this role can. Most importantly however, I want to foster responsible governing.

SPECHLER: Everything I say or write is public and open to examination and criticism. My views appear quite often in newspaper articles and letter columns and on WFIU's "Speak Your Mind." My positions are thus open to comment, debate, and opposition. I am sometimes the lone dissenter on City Council votes because I am fiscally conservative. My Council comments, which are also frequent and pointed, are available on BCAT and the minutes of the Council. I invite telephone conversations at 812 345-1777 at any reasonable hour.

I invite citizens to stop me on my afternoon walks throughout the City to discuss their opinions and mine.

As a Harvard Ph.D. economist I think I understand budget, pension, and financing issues particularly well. With care we can keep ample reserves and not raise taxes irresponsibly.

4) What should the role of the city be in supporting the development of more affordable housing?

CHOPRA: City Councilmembers have a responsibility to all of our residents to maintain an environment where all people can work and thrive. I think the city should be actively pursuing solutions for affordable housing. While I do not have the solution to this complex problem, I do believe that with a diverse City Council and all of the people who care so deeply for their neighbors that a collaborative effort between the city, the private sector and non-profits can be found. I am committed to work to find this solution.

SATTERFIELD: The City should remain a supporting partner to not-for-profit organizations. Habitat for Humanity, Crawford Apartments, Bloomington Housing Authority and others like them understand the local affordable housing challenges better than anyone. Operating under the municipal budget makes them vulnerable to the whim of the voting public where unfortunate change can happen quickly. Affordable housing must be a step toward stability for the occupants.

SPECHLER: We have some hundreds of occasionally homeless individuals and families of all kinds in Bloomington. Most of them are now accommodated in public housing, shelters, or relatives' homes. I support them all. Since Bloomington is an open city with relatively generous services, new homeless individuals will always be attracted here and should be dealt with respectfully. Our new police white-shirts are helping us do that.

Rapid re-housing of homeless persons and families is a successful strategy, since medical and psychological services can easily reach those who need them. The most efficient approach to permanent affordable housing is rent-vouchers, allowing recipients to blend into established

neighborhoods with residents who will befriend them. New facilities such as the Crawford Apartments, which we helped build, are costly and unlikely to be duplicated soon. Rehabilitating older apartments and houses throughout the City is cheaper than new housing, and I am skeptical of offering developers special zoning or other inducements to create a few openings, because this will invite favoritism and even corruption, without helping enough people.

5) How will you address downtown parking issues?

CHOPRA: As a downtown business owner, I saw the effect of the meters first-hand. Luckily, because of the nature of my business, which was by-appointment, it did not affect my business much, though, since I sold the business in August, it has relocated to a section of town that does not have meters. I did, however, see the effect it had on other downtown businesses, which rely on quick, pop-in, transactions. It is negatively affecting many businesses. Many of my neighbors whom I've had the opportunity to meet in the last month have noted that hassle of the parking meters, not the cost, is the main deterrent to coming downtown. I see the meters as a barrier to downtown leisure, and, given the chance, would not have supported the change. However, that is not something I will pursue while on council. There are more important issues.

We can still impact downtown parking congestion. We can require hotel and apartment developers to provide adequate parking for their guests and residents. They should be responsible for not adding to the lack of parking choices.

SATTERFIELD: First, our downtown prospered again. Then, we discovered we had parking problems. Some will call this a good problem. But, it's a problem from multiple views. We're currently managing prosperity and the level of prosperity always changes. The removal and re-introduction of downtown meters is evidence of change in prosperity. We must learn to manage parking in the current environment. Keep the surveys and adjustments coming. I support relaxed schedules and fees during lower occupancy periods. On the other hand, varied schedules could become a well-intended gesture that just confuses the public. Avoiding confusion and resentment is great goal.

SPECHLER: The parking meters were necessary because of the large number of new student residents downtown who would otherwise want to warehouse their cars overnight on our streets. The money received has helped improve the appearance and safety of our public garages and streets. I favor cutting the paid meter hours to 9 am to 9 pm and making special arrangements for restaurants and church-related volunteer activities. Snow and holiday times should be free, upon a declaration by the mayor. Fines for overtime parking should remain as they are, with clear warnings to out-of-town visitors and reasonable appeal opportunities.

We do invite residents to park free in our garages for three hours or less or in paid lots. Healthy pedestrians can walk a couple of blocks from outside the City center, as I do, or take our excellent bus service. County and commercial employees will have garage spaces with a special discount.

6) What will be your approach to the urban deer problem?

CHOPRA: First, it is important to establish that there is, indeed a problem, and the severity of the problem. If, for the health and safety of our residents, it is established that action should be taken, that action should be both fiscally responsible and humane.

SATTERFIELD: I'm unable to characterize this as a "deer" problem. Deer are simply the most visible part of the problem. "We the citizens" of Bloomington created the problem with deer by providing an abundant food supply. This problem now extends to smaller occupants too such as birds and insects. All are vital in our environment as a whole. Inaction cannot be accepted. We need to reduce deer food sources and utilize direct herd control. These creatures are built to survive in marginal environments. Certain areas of Bloomington are affected more than others but the approach should be community wide.

SPECHLER: I favor culling of the deer population if and when a non-lethal method approved by the DNR is proven effective, humane, and affordable to the City. Like our pet dogs and cats, wild deer can be problematic if their numbers and behavior are not monitored and controlled by human beings. Neighborhood deer create expensive accidents, eat our flowers and trees, and attract dangerous predators. Since Indiana eliminated our native wolves and bears, it was up to us to restore the balance of nature at Griffey in which all birds, smaller animals, and plants can thrive there. That policy, approved by the Parks Board, should continue.

7) What will you do to improve and enhance cooperation with Monroe County, IU, and Ivy Tech?

CHOPRA: Our current city officials and staff do great job of communicating and collaborating with other local entities. I believe in using all resources available, and between our city, county and educational institutions, we have many opportunities to draw from the strengths of each other.

SATTERFIELD: Communication is the first problem. It's no secret that it happens on sending and receiving ends. Few organizations experience this differently. Most often, we create a forum to state "This is what we're going to do." I want to be present and represent my office. But sometimes we just need a forum to ask, "What do you need?" I'll make the effort to create those too where others are willing.

SPECHLER: I now serve on the Economic Development Commission of Monroe County and regularly speak with several members of our County government.

I hope to convince our County Commissioners and Council to develop the Karst Farm Park as a first-class soccer venue for the five-county region with the financial assistance of the Community Foundation for Bloomington and Monroe Country, as well as private contributors.

The County should sell the Convention Center to the City so that this facility can be expanded, employing an enhanced innkeeper or food-and-beverage tax on all visitors to Monroe County. These projects could bring jobs and visitors to the Bloomington area with little impact on permanent residents.

I was elected to seven-terms on University Faculty Council, so I have known and worked with several IU presidents. With patience, I find, IU does respond to issues affecting the community, such as historical preservation. Both IU and Ivy Tech are invaluable assets here, but they should work with us to be sure that increased enrollment does not drive up rents for their own students and everyone else.

8) What other issues do you think will be the biggest concerns for the city in the coming years?

CHOPRA: The hospital relocation will be one of the biggest threats to our community in the next several years. However, if we look at the situation as it is, we can also see that it is a great opportunity. Our city needs more affordable housing and employment opportunities at all levels. The city is already being proactive about this change by creating a task force. If the task force includes key local players, including Council representatives in that district, neighborhood associations, social service agencies and those in the business and redevelopment fields, the void left by the hospital can be used for an opportunity for something positive.

SATTERFIELD: I indicated earlier that transitional times can be tough on city employees and citizens when experiencing the rules under new leadership. I expect to watch for transitional problems where citizens are not getting the response they need. But the new administration will also have resources to help them with these problems. Fortunately, it doesn't happen every election cycle in this town. But two other problems pose larger challenges.

Revenue coming from the state level may become a problem. State leaders demonstrate they have tax cuts on their mind. How that will affect Bloomington is still far from clear. I intend to support conservative budgets that shore up infrastructure anticipating shortfalls in future years.

The pending Bloomington Hospital move and the effect on the area it alters or leaves behind is of considerable concern. Of equal concern is IU Health's willingness to cooperate with anyone outside of an investor arena. I understand this process will take years. But while in office, I will push to ensure Bloomington is left with an opportunity not a liability. The strongest options must not be removed from negotiations until the deal is done.

SPECHLER: Unless the unwise decision to move the IU Bloomington Hospital is reversed, we will need to deal with *the existing structures but keep as many essential (emergency, walk-in, and clinical) services as possible* downtown. To replace any departments that must be redone, such as the ICU, building on a site adjacent to the current hospital is possible and more desirable than the site at North Park. Building at North Park will force many clinics and doctors' offices to rebuild nearby at unnecessary cost to all.

We need to find the funds to develop the Certified Technology Park with some more green space along the B-line trail. The Switchyard Park will give us great opportunities to increase the venues for music and artistic performances outside, as well as play and sports areas. Downtown TIF revenues should be used for these, probably by using bonding authority.

For the colder seasons, we need a medium-size (200 seat) theater downtown accommodate Cardinal Stage and local or visiting theater companies. The Buskirk-Chumley theater needs to be fully supported and perhaps expanded to allow special events nearby. I support subsidies to increase the number of young people and low-income attendees at educational, theatrical, and musical events.