

ELECTIONS 2012

Keys to the Candidates: Monroe County Council, at large

League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County

October 4, 2012

Elizabeth Lee Jones, D

Geoffrey McKim, D

Cheryl Munson, D

Brian Ellison, R

Skip Daley, R

Jennifer K. Mickel, R

What are your qualifications for the office you are seeking?

JONES: Monroe County resident 53 years; small business owner 29 years; service on Plan [Commission](#), Parks and Recreation, President — Board of Zoning Appeals. See leejoneforcountycouncil.com.

McKIM: A passion for serving the community; willingness to put in the effort to do the job well; the experience of a successful term on Council.

MUNSON: Overseeing budgets: township (16 years); research grants (38 years). County-wide community service, 1971-present. Historic Preservation Board. Plan Review Committee. Social Services Grants Committee, Chair 2011.

ELLISON: I am a global project manager for a computer company; I have experience in working with large budgets and in dealing with different groups.

DALEY: Former City Government consultant and County Council Office Director, Skip now owns a Business & Professional Development firm specialising in budget management, marketing, and planning.

MICKEL: 25 words, how absurd! 'Hometown girl', educated-arts, sciences, language, historical context, ..property owner, experienced entrepreneurial businesswoman — specializing in biological and horticultural consultation, care, design.

What are your budget priorities for Monroe County?

JONES: Maintaining and strengthening the local safety net is a high priority. I want the employees of the County to get fair wages for their work. I would like to see the Community Corrections budget increased, and find the [money](#) to buy a building for them, which saves money for the jail. The County has many aging, inefficient vehicles in their fleet that should be replaced with more fuel efficient ones. I would also like to budget for technology for a mostly paperless County government, saving much money in paper, copiers, printers, and expensive maintenance agreements.

McKIM: My top priorities are providing our statutorily-mandated services in an efficient and effective manner, strengthening the local economy, and enhancing services for families and children. Specific initiatives include: purchasing a community corrections facility to increase alternatives to incarceration, putting more Sheriff's deputies on the streets, supporting local culture of entrepreneurship, building the County's alternative transportation infrastructure and connecting it to Bloomington's greenways network, building a sidewalk along Leonard Springs to increase pedestrian safety, enhancing and marketing the westside employment area, incentivizing brownfield

redevelopment, and expanding the convention center in ways that enhance the economic opportunities for Monroe County residents.

MUNSON: According to the Indiana Business Review, Monroe County's economic forecast is "relatively bright." For next budget cycle (2014), the county will not need to cut services if departments continue to operate frugally. My budget priorities include: public safety, including dealing with changes brought by I-69; CATS community television and Citizens' Academy (transparency in government); services for our youth (Youth Services Bureau, Parks and Recreation); and planning for growth (including expanding tourism). With team-building, we can find further efficiencies in county operations by developing structural changes from the "bottom up," with the department heads and their staff, not "top down."

ELLISON: My main priority is safety and security. We need to make sure we have the Sheriff's department is funded at the correct levels to make sure we have a safe community. The next level is to make sure we have the mandated areas funded correctly. From this point we can look at [funding](#) the items the citizens of Monroe County would like to have covered, while at the same time keeping taxes in line.

DALEY: Adopting a Zero-Based Budgeting System is imperative for our County! It is unacceptable that our County has approved deficit budgets since 2008; step one: BALANCE OUR BUDGET! My funding priorities begin with public safety and infrastructure! Where I differ from other candidates, is that I have created plan to make our county departments run more efficient and effectively. As a Council Member, I will encourage County government innovation which will lead to enormous cost savings. Additionally, I will [invest](#) in economic development, as it is vital to change our current climate to one that is supportive of business.

MICKEL: To deny the budgets: *that would create obstacle for constitutional property rights and access to business 'start-up' or to create jobs in Monroe County. I am particularly interested in free agent 'Blue Collar' jobs. *Rescind the MCCP. Break the power hold of the people who would control the land without the direct consent of the owners. *Return constitutional due process to the Courts; reassess processes at the jail to reduce budget thru' anti-recidivism plans. *Stop euthanasia for hidden profit at the animal shelter. Reform. *Reform the education of our children to create successful, thoughtful, empowered, business people.

How would you encourage citizen participation in financial decision making?

JONES: As Sophia Travis was advocating, we should have a budget prospectus available for all the public to view. I would also like to see not only the budget, but also the impact of the budget, easily available on the County web site. I think it is important there be a narrative about what the budget decisions mean that is easily available to the public. Sometimes people don't want to have to wade through numbers to figure out what the impact of government decisions will mean for them. I would participate in informal citizen meetings to hear directly from the electorate.

McKIM: Citizen participation is critical to a responsive local government, and I have been consistently dedicated to transparency and citizen engagement throughout my term. My Council colleagues and I moved the meeting times to 5:30PM to allow the public better opportunities to participate. Education and outreach, though, are also critical to citizen participation in financial decision-making. I have a blog, in53.wordpress.com — the only local government finance blog in Monroe County — in which I discuss various facets of local government finance, including budgeting, taxes, transportation, and economic development tools.

MUNSON: Budgeting is an exercise in understanding community values and setting priorities. Knowledge of where our county tax dollars go provides perspective, so I have developed a list of county services for my website www.cherylmunson.us. Citizens also need to know that their voices will be heard. When I was on the Indian Creek Township Board, I encouraged not only public comment at meetings, but was available via phone, email, or in person to learn about concerns. But the county has 11 townships, so in addition to my general accessibility I will have monthly constituent meetings announced via newspaper, website, and Facebook.

ELLISON: Well as a republican I would be able to bring in another voice and group of citizens into the process that are not involved today with the current one party rule we have in county government. We need to have a balance in

government so everyone's voice is heard. By bringing balance back to local government this should encourage more people to be involved and to have their voices heard than what we have today.

DALEY: Phase four of my highly publicized platform of Innovation is Resident Empowerment! Ideas I have brought to the table encouraging greater government transparency and increased citizen participation include: quarterly town hall meetings for Commissioners and Councilors, updating the public about current issues and topics being considered, as well as an opportunity to engage in two way dialog; semi-annual forums for the business community to participate in round table discussions; and my regularly scheduled weekend breakfast meetings. Hearing public input is only the first step. County government needs to begin acting upon the voice of the people.

MICKEL: Participation is crucial, public attention and vote, in our 'people's government'. Bloomington has CATSTV.NET archived forums, meetings, etc. to view at will. Comment with the HTOnline, mine under 'VOTEMICKELjennifer' search, for the most part. Look me up on facebook, 'votemickel'. History says as soon as a society becomes comfortable with prosperity, especially at the lowest levels of income, it becomes susceptible to cons who would capture their prosperity and freedom by pacifying the people into not participating in their own defense. We find ourselves in this predicament ... witness ramrodding MCCP engineered by Stoops. I hope ... not too late.