



## Montgomery County Commissioner Candidate Interview

### 1) Why are you running as a candidate for the Board of Commissioners?

Brown: I'm from Lower Merion. I have seen since 2003 taxes and spending and borrowing go up this is not sustainable. I have been fighting that. It is much harder to bring fiscal sanity back. Excessive spending and borrowing always leads to more taxes. I am running because of my experience in Lower Merion.

Castor: I was in the district attorney's office for 23 years. When I ran for County Commissioner I did it because I wanted to keep the county going in the right direction with honesty and integrity. That is not what happened. The fastest rising line item in the county is debt service. I have voted against all of the budgets. The commissioners have spent more than they have taken in. We will likely lose our bond rating. There is a significant problem with honesty and integrity. This is a group that is dedicated to enhancing our community that is why we want to be aligned with you.

### 2) What are the most pressing issues facing the county and what are your plans to address them?

Brown: Finances, finances and finances are the top three issues. If the county's finances are not in good shape...whether it is infrastructure, transportation, core services...everything is dependant upon that. All of them have in common it will constrict the ability to make good decisions.

Castor: So much of the county's financial picture is hidden even from me. The county has used up its fund balance almost completely. I do not know if any of the debt can be restructured. Finances are critical. We also have a serious problem with corruption. The commissioners frequently make decisions on issues that are not on the agenda.

### 3) Montgomery County's Chief Financial Officer recently warned that if the county's cash balance sinks any lower, there will be a definite downgrade in the current AAA bond rating. How do you plan on maintaining the county's excellent bond rating in this challenging economic environment?

Brown: When there was that negative outlook...We would like to go talk to the rating agencies and let them know that we plan to take care of it. In Lower Merion, we have a balance fund policy. We put in a policy that said we will keep 15-18% of budget in reserve. The rating agencies want to see that you have a policy and that you will stick to it. We have

Bruce Castor and Jenny Brown

talked about a number of these fiscal policies. We want to establish something that is reasonable and then adhere to it.

Castor: We had a policy, but we were sent into this situation by one of the current commissioners.

**4) Do you believe property tax assessment reform is needed in Pennsylvania? If so, would you support property tax reform that provides greater uniformity and equity through a system of more regular county-wide tax assessments?**

Castor: The premise I do not know enough about. I do know that property tax assessments are done uniformly across the county. The county is broke. If you were to tell me that we need to have the county reassessed and it will help the system. If it is going to cost the county, I am going to tell you that it is not possible. I do not want a property tax increase to fund it.

Brown: After a countywide reassessment. The legislature found that 30-40% are out of whack within the first year. You are not solving the problem with reassessment. You need to keep taxes in line. There is not question that taxes are having a dampening effect on properties. Eventually, even if you get to the area of equity again, it could be a short-term fix, but very quickly it is going to be out of whack again. We need to look at spending issues that are causing these issues.

**5) What is your position on school districts appealing the assessed value of recently purchased residential real estate in Montgomery County?**

Castor and Brown: We are opposed to that.

**6) REALTORS® are very knowledgeable about their communities and the housing market. As a County Commissioner, how would you utilize this expertise? Would you consider appointing individuals recommended by our organization to real estate related boards and commissions at the county level?**

Castor: To the second part yes. The first part, yes answers that to. I can't think of anything other than those terms. I hire people based on expertise and utilize them on those terms. I would like to have people brought in on expertise and not friendships.

Brown: Too often when we have proposals in government they do not come from people in the real world. We need to have it come from the angle that people in the business world think critically. We are much better off. We have had a problem with Sunshine. We have found that when the constituents know what we are doing they are able to offer solutions.

**7) What political, business or other community organizations have endorsed your candidacy?**

- Republican Committee of Montgomery County
- The Builders Association

**8) Why should a REALTOR® vote for you?**

Bruce Castor and Jenny Brown

Brown: I think our approach to the county. Our desire is to maintain Montgomery County as the fabulous place that it is. What it all comes down to is the county's finances. We can either get out of the way or we can create obstacles. It is important to let private industry do what it does so well.

Castor: That which governs best governs least. Those are the types of organizations that we reach out to.