



## **Bucks County Candidate Interview**

### **Robert Loughery**

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

I live in Bedminster and I've lived in Bucks County for most of my life. I've been very involved in my community. I have a real estate and development company. Most of the work that I've done has been in the lower part of the county. I have live in upper and grew up in central Bucks, I love Bucks County. I worked with the economic development corporation in the county.

I have worked very closely with the county. I have been blessed and exposed to some of those parts of the county. I have been a part of the historical society. I am on the community college foundation. This presented me with an opportunity to give back to the county. I was out of the political realm for a while, but I have a heart and desire to give back to Bucks County. I went to one of my mentors, Jim Greenwood and talked about the community and the role that the commissioner has in the county. I would love an opportunity to have my own term and be involved in some of the policies and issues that impact the county.

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

The budget is the obvious one. We are listening to all of this play out on the federal and state level, and it is going to come down to us. It is one of the primary issues facing the county. I have spent the last six months getting an understanding what all of the departments do; getting acclimated and absorbing as much information as I can. This budget is one of the most important ones that I have seen.

We are in a good financial position to weather the storm and challenges because of policies the prior Commissioners took to build up the rainy day fund built up. We are in a good position because we have a triple a bond rating. Most of our budget is going to health and human services; and, is funded by state and federal sources We need to consider how we utilize federal and state funds and their associated cuts. At my business, we haven't given our employees a raise in four years and payroll at the county is the biggest cost. We have got to make hard decisions. We need to be able to do it here and now in this upcoming budget

The ramifications of that will be to consider how that impacts the services that the county provides. We provide services to people who live in or around the margins. It is important to understand that because we need to understand that this is a quality of life issue. Our prisons, our nursing home and veterans' services are all very well rated. How



are we going to provide services where we are still protecting the dignity of the people receiving those services? How do we continue to maintain those core services?

Economic development is another huge priority. I have worked in economic development. I worked on the county's enterprise zone and helped start it as well as the county's Brownfield revitalization programs.. We need sustaining jobs. Economic development, job creation—this brings a stronger tax base and a better mix of tax ratables for our communities

- 3) In terms of the 2012 county budget, how should the Board of Commissioners address the issue of falling revenue and increased demand for services caused by the slow economy?
- 4) Would you support property tax reform in Pennsylvania that gives greater authority to the commonwealth to mandate more regular county-wide tax assessments?

I am not in favor of a countywide reassessment. The state is about to finish a report on property taxes. Everybody has a different model. If the tax reform that came out said that we need to have a more regular countywide reassessment that would be costly to the county and I think that you will see industrial properties going down. That could have an inverse affect on residential properties by seeing increases in millage. I would like to see other types of tax reform. I am not sure that is something that we want to be doing.

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

I am not in favor of it. It is an inverse way of spot assessing. My answer is go at this in a different way. We need to look at how we fund our education system.

- 6) Suburban Philadelphia is currently one of the fastest growing regions in Pennsylvania. How do you plan to manage projected population growth and shifts at the county level? How does housing fit into this plan?

We are updating our comp plan now. That is due out before the end year. That does not have a lot of teeth, but it does provide what we would like to see. We do not have control over zoning, but we could incentivize things like downtown redevelopment, infill development, utilizing existing infrastructure to help guide future growth in the county. Obviously our growth is strong, so from the commissioner's stand point we need to pursue incentive possibilities for developers to revitalize communities and reuse existing properties. A big part of that is how we capture the younger generation to live here. We



are trying to work through how we get people to live, work, play and stay here. We need to look at the fact that public transportation is not strong here...so things like transit oriented development are important next to our public transportation corridors. That is one way we can some impact. At some point I would like to invest in older communities and encourage growth there. Affordable housing is an important issue for Bucks County. How do we encourage or incentivize in a way that can bring in a variety of housing options.

- 7) 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?

We just established a Commissioner's economic development council. We wanted to get a business related perspective. We talked about the importance of having a commercial industrial broker on there. I think that is important.

- 8) Have you been endorsed by any political party or organization?

Bucks County Republican Party

- 9) Why should a REALTOR® vote for you?

“Because I never short your commission”. –Seriously, because I believe I understand your world and the issues you see as important. Real estate does not exist in a vacuum. The state of our communities – the quality of life - is a huge part of the decisions we make when we decide to invest...whether buying or leasing a property. I know that maintaining the quality of life is a huge part of that evaluation; the county has an important role to play in many aspects of the quality of our life. I understand business, and I think it important to bring that perspective into government.