



## **Chester County Candidate Interview**

### **Ryan Costello**

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

I am running for many reasons. I have lived and worked in Chester County my entire life and am committed to maintaining and improving the quality of life for all of our residents. I have been involved in politics for many years, and I have a long history of public service. At the county level, as Realtors, you are working with the assessment office, the recorder of deeds office. There are some more broad based issues that we as Commissioners need to examine. That's why I'm running: quality of life issues, enhanced revenue—when our tax base is shrinking. We now have less tax ratable that we did in previous years. That is a challenge. We need to do more with less. We need to everything that we can to make sure that we are not raising taxes. I believe strongly that elected officials need to be independent thinkers who will support commonsense solutions and work to control spending.

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

The more pressing issue is that we will get less state and federal funding. Across board, funded mandates are becoming unfunded mandates. We will be getting less money to perform that we are asked to perform. That is the biggest challenge that we have. Given our AAA bond rating, we need to make sure that the conditions in the county remain attractive.

- 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?

In terms of the issue of falling revenue—taxes or reducing service those are the obvious ones. We could take underutilized properties in the county—in a number under utilized properties in different areas across the county and assess them to see if we can increase our tax ratable. We need to work with the economic development group to expand this initiative.

- 4) Would you support property tax reform in Pennsylvania that gives greater authority to the commonwealth to mandate more regular county-wide tax assessments?

The current system is archaic. Everything needs to be revamped. If you do a reassessment the end result that the revenue is not more that it was before reassessment. You are going to have winners and losers. No one county can fix the problem.



- 5) 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?

I think from a county perspective, transportation funding and how citizens use our existing infrastructure—we are often times the program coordinator for major projects. The county can look at patterns in growth and channel funding to those areas. We can look at some those projects and perhaps develop revenue that way. The major issue will be senior housing—will be a great benefit to the county. We need to find land uses that generate revenue to the county. Housing—encouraging redevelopment opportunities will continue to be an interest to me. We should continue to fund those types of opportunities. We need to make sure that our county's housing market and stock does not decline.

- 6) Access to accurate real estate records is an important issue for our REALTOR® members. Would you support funding to the Recorder of Deeds and Assessment offices to ensure availability and accuracy of this information?

Yes. They have the funding. They produce revenue for the county. They utilize \$3 of every \$5 collected for record improvements. Technological upgrades are of course a priority for that department.

- 7) REALTORS® are very knowledgeable about their communities and the real estate industry. 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?

I deal with REALTORS a lot. I think that if you do not have a real estate market that is vibrant, you are going to have a lot of problems. It is a domino effect for the community. Realtors are forecasters for what will happen. I will certainly consider candidates from the industry where appropriate. We may end up appointing an auxiliary board of appeals. I would like to see a realtor or an appraiser serve on that board.

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

Chester County Republicans and the Police Chief's Association

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

You want a Commissioner that understands the real estate market and your business. Every time you sell a house to someone you sell an idea that a community will meet their needs. Ultimately, you are an ambassador to Chester County. I understand this because I represent the county. I am willing to make tough decisions. We have challenges, and I am



willing to make tough decisions—I like the challenge of this position. We are dealing with declining revenue and no appetite for raising taxes. We need to make sure that our county tax rates are low and services are maintained at the county level.