



2026 Allegany County Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE : Kit Pepper Lescallette

OFFICE SOUGHT : Allegany County Commissioner

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*I confirm that the responses provided here are my official positions in seeking local office and I understand that **Allegany County Education Association** reserves the right to share my responses with members and interested parties.*

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: Kit Pepper Lescallette **DATE SUBMITTED:**
7-22-2026

Candidates: To be considered for a recommendation, you must indicate your response to each of the questions. You may use more space than is provided to elaborate on your answers and provide clarification, explanation, and other context, but please be certain to clearly indicate the questions(s) to which you refer. Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to **Allegany County Education Association**.

Education Funding and Local Budgets:

1. Do you commit to prioritizing public education funding in future county budgets? What are your top three budget priorities for the public school system?

I recognize that public education has not always been a priority for our county in the past. Past leadership has ignored the fact that schools can be the county's largest economic development assets. School quality is an essential factor both for incoming families and employers considering locating here.

In Allegany County, millions of dollars are spent on economic development projects with little public input and limited post-project evaluation. These expenditures need to be reviewed and their actual return on investment needs to be calculated. The decisions that are made in the future about funding economic development need to include this question.

Dollar for dollar, which investment is more likely to create lasting population growth: another chain restaurant or outstanding public schools?

Strong schools are not simply another budget item. They are one of the county's most valuable economic development assets. Families choose communities based on schools long before they choose restaurants or industrial parks.

As a result of this approach, I believe that the Board of Education will have better funding availability and be able to make decisions that impact the BOE. I would assume that the top three priorities are teacher and staff recruitment and retention; safe, modern facilities; classroom resources and student support services. However, as a candidate for the county commission, I recognize that my job will be to provide dollars and that the BOE will be best able to determine the exact budget needs.

2. How do you plan to fund public school priorities? What are your thoughts on the current county tax and revenue structure and any actions you would take to update the tax code to promote fairness and equity?

Better stewardship of existing resources is step one. The county commission currently has a pot of money that they refer to as "non-taxpayer money" and then utilize it for economic development efforts that are seldom fully disclosed to the public. These projects are not reviewed after the fact to determine how well that money was spent and what we got for it. As a result, the services that determine our quality of life are often shortchanged, only getting the money "left over." Schools, public safety, social services, libraries, and roads should be priority funded, not flat funded year after year while we place expensive wagers on new businesses with only the promise jobs.

Allegany County has the lowest cost of living in the state. If we also had the safest

communities and the best schools, we would not have to use tax money to bribe businesses or families to relocate here.

3. How you would utilize your budget authority to address shortfalls facing our schools if the state or federal government reduces their commitment(s)?

Budgeting is always a matter of priorities. Protect classroom instruction first, review administrative spending, pursue grants and partnerships, protect our reserves and make budget decisions transparently with public input. I defer to the BOE for decisions on how to spend available money, but recognize that the County Commission has the obligation and responsibility to meet the budget needs.

Too often at the commission level and at the Board of Education, the choices are between "bad" and "worse." When citizens understand this, they can better understand the decisions made. When citizens have knowledge of and trust in the process, it cultivates hope and a vision that our problems can be fixed and a brighter future is possible. I know that the transparency we will see at the county level going forward will enable us to fund our basic needs more robustly and have community support to do so

4. Do you commit to honoring the role of your elected body in upholding the policy and funding mandates associated with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future?

 XXX Yes

 No

Additional Comments: The Blueprint is state law. The funding and priority mandates are clear. County commissions do not have the discretion to ignore it. If there is a requirement that is not suited to our county, then we have the option to work with our state delegation to create legislation to revise how it applies to us.

5. Please discuss your philosophy related to charter schools. Do you believe they should be added in our county public school structure?

My background provides me with extensive experience on how public education and charter schools coexist. I worked as a consultant to the 7th largest public school system in the country (Orange County, FL). I also served as Executive Director to a 25-person Blue Ribbon Panel On Education, during a period when charter schools and traditional public schools competed for funding. The members were appointed by area mayors and the local school board to address public school performance and community alignment. I coordinated a survey of nearly 5,000 teachers, administrators, and community members, including over 100 questions covering district operations, communication, and educational goals. The value of public dollars being spent on private education was an ongoing topic for the 18 months, and highly debated among the appointees. Private use of public dollars for charter

schools was not one of the over 100 recommendations made in our final report.

While I am open to innovative education models, I do not see any benefit to funding charter schools in a manner that undermines public schools.

Public Funding for Private Schools

6. Do you support or oppose allocating public funding to non-public school students through voucher programs?

_____ Support __XX__ Oppose

Additional Comments: No. I can not see any situation where this would be acceptable.

7. Do you support or oppose allowing non-public school students to participate in public school extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.)?

___XXX__ Support _____ Oppose

Additional Comments: I support participation when it can be accommodated without displacing public-school students or imposing additional costs on taxpayers. My experiences in Orange County showed that an inclusive policy was beneficial to everyone, and worked to ease issues that can occur when students transition from home school or private schools to public school.

Collective Bargaining

8. Do you support or oppose school employees gaining the right to strike?

__XX__ Support _____ Oppose

Additional Comments: I strongly support collective bargaining and good-faith negotiations. As a former Teamster, I understand the realities of the challenges. No one wants students' education disrupted but the ability to strike remains an important part of meaningful collective bargaining

9. What is your understanding of the nature of the relationship between the Board of Education, Superintendent, county government, and union as it relates to negotiations, budget development, and administration of schools? How do you see yourself utilizing the power of your office in working within this structure?

Transparency improves relationships. When agencies and stakeholders learn about important decisions after they have already been made, trust suffers.

I recognize that the BOE and BOCC have had issues in the past and that current relationships are improved. We all need to stay in our lanes, but take frequent stops for roadside chats so that we can identify shared visions and goals.

10. How do you balance honoring ratified contracts with public employees in the county, including educators, with other priorities, especially in tight fiscal times?

As mentioned above, I recognize that good schools are one of our best economic development assets. For too long, large portions of the county funds have been spent on long-shot efforts that do not appear to be delivering. As a county commissioner, I will see funding schools as the priority it should be. And expense decisions that could threaten honoring ratified contracts will be examined closely and prioritized accordingly.

11. Do you support or oppose public negotiations, where members of the public and educators are able to witness collective bargaining between our school system and union negotiating teams?

 XXX Support

 Oppose

Additional Comments:

I support public negotiations because taxpayers fund these contracts, educators deserve to know their concerns are being heard, and citizens should have the opportunity to understand the financial realities facing both sides.

That does not mean every strategy discussion must occur in public. Productive negotiations can include private caucuses where each side can evaluate proposals candidly. But the bargaining itself should be conducted as openly as practical. Better public understanding builds trust, reduces misinformation, and results in stronger long-term support for our schools.

12. Do you commit to meeting with union leadership to talk about the needs facing our schools (including salary and staffing levels) and the revenue or other budget actions necessary to meet those needs?

 XXX Yes

 No

Additional Comments: Communication is everything. Strong believer in the adage that I can't fully understand my own position if I am not able to see how and why you got to yours.

Racial and Social Justice:

13. To encourage critical thinking within our classrooms, we believe educators should have professional autonomy on how to implement curriculum to meet the needs of our students. Do you support or oppose this position?

 XXX Support

 Oppose

Additional Comments: My husband is a recently retired ACPS teacher. He spent over 40 years teaching biology and earth science in Maryland, Arizona and Florida. My personal opinion is that teachers should be trusted professionals while remaining accountable to curriculum standards and community expectations.

14. What specific policy goals and objectives will you pursue aimed at addressing racial and social justice, including support of diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students and providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and supports?

This is probably one of the current hot topic issues that I find most challenging. I recognize that as a county commissioner, I will have little ability to influence the policy goals and objectives that the school system will use to navigate through these issues. My personal view is that every student deserves equal opportunity, equal access to resources, and the support necessary to succeed. While curriculum decisions ultimately belong to educators and the Board of Education, the value of input from parents and the community should not be ignored. I encourage policies that remove barriers to student success and result in every student being treated with dignity and fairness.

15. Immigration enforcement is a matter of federal jurisdiction. What is your position on how local law enforcement should interact with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement? And how will you work to ensure school grounds, bus stops, and other school spaces are safe havens against immigration enforcement actions?

Every child deserves to feel safe attending school. Schools should remain places for learning, and county government should follow state and federal law while working to ensure students and families feel secure in accessing public education. No community is improved when political differences make it unsafe for families to send their kids to school.

16. Stable, safe, and affordable housing is necessary for all students to be able to succeed in school and in the recruitment of educators, including education support professionals, to live in the communities they serve. How do you plan to address the housing crisis in the county?

Our recent efforts to address housing have focused heavily on attracting large developers, with mixed results. I believe we need to invest in the neighborhoods we already have. Allegany County has aging housing stock that is deteriorating, while many residents are unemployed or underemployed and looking for opportunities to build marketable skills.

I would work to create programs that help rehabilitate existing homes, creating skilled jobs while preserving the desirable character of our historic communities, strengthening property values, and expanding our tax base. This approach can increase the supply of affordable housing for families, teachers, and education support professionals without waiting for large subdivision projects. Revitalizing existing neighborhoods is an investment in both our workforce and our quality of life.

Privatization and Support for Education Support Professionals

17. Are you in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance services rather than have those services provided by Board of Education employees?

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments: This is not an either/or issue. Public employees should not be replaced through privatization simply to reduce wages or benefits. Any outsourcing proposal should demonstrate measurable public benefit and cost savings. Public dollars, even when dispensed as contractor fees, should support jobs that provide wages and benefits capable of sustaining families and strengthening our local economy.

18. Too many ESPs work second jobs and struggle to provide for their families, buy homes, save for their futures, and afford community or four-year college tuition for their children to learn a trade and plan a career. The looming threats of privatization by school districts, which would import even lower-paid workers from outside areas, risk the stability of schools and communities and further undermine the value of ESPs and their jobs.

ESPs across the state are organizing to build presence, strength, and power in a campaign focused on a bill of rights that defines the issues long nagging these

dedicated employees and now threatening not only the recruitment of new employees but the retention of dedicated veteran employees. You can read about the [ESP Bill of Rights here](#).

Do you support the ESP Bill of Rights?

___XXX___ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments: I support employees organizing and recognize that it is a viable path to solutions and programs that meet the goals and needs of public education. I support the goals of ensuring that education support professionals earn wages and benefits that allow them to build stable careers. I would review the specific provisions of any proposed legislation while supporting efforts that strengthen both our workforce and our schools.

19. Please share how you would use your office to help make the ESP Bill of Rights a reality in the county.

I welcome the opportunity to meet with education support professionals and learn how the county government can become a stronger partner in recruiting, retaining, and supporting the employees who keep our schools running every day.

Essay Questions

A. Why are you running for this position? What personal attributes, characteristics, and experiences make you the right candidate for this position?

I am running for Allegany County Commissioner because I believe our county needs leadership that is open, responsive, and willing to work in partnership with the public. Throughout my life, I have combined business experience, community service, and public involvement to help solve problems and bring people together.

Before retiring to Frostburg, I owned and operated a governmental affairs/public relations firm, a commercial printing company, and a direct mail business. My work included communications, public outreach, and consulting for public agencies, private companies, nonprofit organizations, and law firms. Clients included Orange County Public Schools, NASCAR, Time Warner Cable, Comcast, and numerous law firms representing their clients. Over the years, I also managed or consulted on more than 50 political campaigns for Republican, Democratic, and independent candidates.

I completed six years of college coursework, including engineering studies, and while attending engineering school I worked as a substitute teacher, teaching mathematics and algebra.

Earlier in my career, I served on government boards and commissions in Florida and was active with the League of Women Voters, eventually serving on the Florida state board. Those experiences taught me how effective government depends on transparency, public participation, and the ability to work constructively with people who hold different viewpoints.

Since moving to Allegany County, I have remained actively involved in my community. I served two terms as President of the Frostburg Garden Club, helped bring the Habitat for Humanity ReStore to our area, organized grocery deliveries for vulnerable residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, and have enjoyed supporting the local arts community. I also restored a long-vacant historic Main Street building in Frostburg, creating gallery space for local artists and helping bring new life to downtown.

My husband, Gene, taught science at Mountain Ridge High School for 20 years, and Allegany County has become the home we always hoped to find. I believe my business background, community involvement, and lifelong commitment to public service have prepared me to serve effectively on the County Commission, and I look forward to working with educators, public employees, and citizens throughout our county.

- B. What are the top three things you would like to accomplish in the next four years if you are elected to County Commissioner?

My top three accomplishments will be 1) Welcoming public opinion, engagement and participation in our county government, 2) Stewardship of county funds that includes ongoing reviews and assessments of value and results, 3) Showing that our county is best served with non-partisan management and decision making.

Additional Information

Along with this completed questionnaire, please provide an up-to-date bio or resume as well as a current list of endorsements for this election cycle.

Bio/Resume

I am a retired business owner with decades of experience in management, public relations, problem solving, risk management, liability assessment and comprehensive

planning. In addition to a successful business career, I raised two children. My daughter is a licensed architect working in DC. My son is a civil engineer employed at the DOT in Atlanta, GA as a bridge designer.

List of Endorsements:

Prior to this submission, I have not participated in an official endorsement process. If you require endorsements from individuals in Allegany County to serve as references, I can provide those.