Six Democrats have filed to run for the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners in November this year. There are only three seats available on the Commission this year, so only the three Democrats receiving the most votes in the March 3 primary will move forward to face candidates from other parties in the fall election. You'll get a chance to meet the candidates in the Forum in Tuesday. Here are the details:

We asked each of the candidates to submit responses to two questions: 1) What do you want the people of New Hanover County to know about you? and 2) What are the one or two most important issues facing the county? Here is a synopsis of their responses. They are listed in reverse alphabetical order by first name. You probably won't see them listed that way anywhere else! Enjoy.

**Travis Robinson**

Travis Robinson has lived in the New Hanover County area since 1977. He has been married to Kim Robinson for 22 years and has two children, Collin 22 and Carlee 18. Robinson retired from the New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office after 29 years of service as a Deputy Sheriff Lieutenant. Robinson started out in public service as a Police Explorer with the Wilmington Police Department in June 1978 and became a Police Cadet with the department from 1982-1985. He has 52 hours of credit toward a degree at Cape Fear Community College.

Travis is opposed to the sale of New Hanover Regional Medical Center.

He wants to ensure that the New Hanover County School system maintains compliance with Title IX and continues intervention, reporting and support with issues related to inappropriate actions with our school children.

He also wants to ensure that funding is in place to allow the most current safety measures to support teachers, administrators and school resource officers.

**Steve Miller**

Steve Miller was born in New York, earned his B.A. at Boston University and earned his Ph.D. in physical chemistry at Georgetown University in Washington DC where he lived for four decades before moving to Wilmington in 2014. His two grown children are graduates of the U. of Virginia and Duke University. Before retiring in 2002, Miller worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, was an environmental and business development consultant, was director corporate of government relations/marketing for a Fortune 200 company and other positions. Since coming to Wilmington, Miller has volunteered at the Miracle League, the Cape Fear Literacy Council, the County’s Teen Court, A Safe Place, the Cameron Executive Network at UNCW, and more. He has served on the Boards of The Full Belly Project and Access of Wilmington.

Steve believes the most important issues facing New Hanover County include the rampant re-zoning of county neighborhoods to allow much higher density than the original zoning, which creates traffic, storm water run-off, and school overcrowding problems.

He also believes that that the hospital sale is an important issue… both the process and the absence of a sound motive for the sale and is also concerned about getting Chemours to pay the bill for CFPUA’s PFAS treatment system.
Leslie Cohen

Originally from Atlanta, Leslie Cohen and her husband Jeff moved to Wilmington in 2013 after both of their children moved out. Jeff's grandfather built a cottage on Carolina Beach in 1933 and the couple has spent summers with their family in New Hanover County for decades. Cohen believes that her experience as a small businessperson -- currently in fine art and previously in commercial graphics, creating collateral advertising for Fortune 500 companies -- give her the skill set needed to make her an effective county commissioner. Her passion for the issues can be seen in her extensive activism and volunteerism in New Hanover.

Leslie believes the potential hospital sale and WAVE defunding are among the most pressing issues facing the county,

She also believes these issues are a symptom of a much bigger issue in New Hanover County, where she believes we have a dysfunctional Board of Commissioners, with a cabal of three making decisions behind closed doors, derailing public input.

Kyle Horton

Kyle Horton first came to Wilmington to attend UNCW in 1999. She graduated summa cum laude with a BS in Biology and subsequently earned both her MD and MBA as part of a physician leadership development program. She is from a working-class family with a long history of service in the Armed Forces. She worked as an instructor of medical residents at the Department of Veterans Affairs and currently works in consulting and assisting with complicated medical claims to ensure Veterans get the benefits they earned. She’s also engaged in initiatives to improve provider education and awareness of healthcare disparities, environmental health, and veteran-specific healthcare needs.

Kyle fears the proposed sale of NHRMC may damage the healthcare safety net and increase healthcare costs in the region.

She sees the most important issues facing the county as the lack of accountability, transparency, and adherence to democratic norms and values by the current majority of commissioners. As commissioner, Horton pledges to prioritize reversing the recent undemocratic changes to transparency.

Jonathan Barfield Jr.

Jonathan Barfield has served on the New Hanover Board of County Commissioners since December 2008. He has served as Chairman of the Board on four occasions and Vice-Chair three times. Over the past eleven years Barfield said he has shown leadership "by leading and championing issues that directly effect people, whether it be leading during a hurricane or storm event, to chairing the Department of Social Services Board, to being a voice on Wave Transit’s board." He has been married to his wife Laura for the 31 years and has four daughters. Barfield is Broker|Owner of Barfield and Associates Realty and has been a licensed REALTOR® since 1997.

Jonathan is concerned about the lack of affordable housing in the community which he views as a key component to promote economic development and job creation. He proposes a joint city|county Affordable Housing Committee.

He also wants to focus on dealing with a rising opioid crisis. He supports the building of treatment facilities that will provide free long term treatment center for citizens of New Hanover County.
Don Betz

Don Betz is a native of Rochester, New York, and served three tours in Vietnam. He and his wife Valerie resettled in Wilmington in February 1975. He was a manager for Federal Paper Board Company on 23rd Street. Don and Val have three daughters and a son. The girls all are graduates of UNC-Chapel Hill and our son is a N.C. State graduate. Betz completed his BS in Business Administration at UNCW in 1981, the year he was elected to his first term on the Wilmington City Council. He was an investment broker at A.G. Edwards & Sons when he was elected as the City’s Mayor in 1987. He served five terms as Mayor of Wilmington. He has served as Town Manager for Holly Ridge and later North Topsail Beach and recently he retired from local government. He was inducted into the Order of the Long Leaf Pine by Governor Cooper.

Don opposes the planned sale of New Hanover Regional Medical Center and agrees with the public that the Notice of Intent to Sell was not transparent.

He is also concerned about protecting neighborhoods from excessive development, and that our schools need additional funds for teachers and bus drivers.

If you have any announcements, comments, questions or concerns regarding this email series, please contact the Editor here.

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