

# LWW<sup>®</sup> 2017 Voter Guide

## League of Women Voters of Montgomery County

This Voter Guide features answers provided by the candidates. The questions are from the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County. All statements are directly from the candidate, not edited by the League. The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates or political parties.

The information also is on the League's website: <http://lwvmcva.org>.

### ***Blacksburg***

#### ***Mayor***

#### ***Town Council***

***(Three Seats Open)***

#### ***Mayor***

Krishna Chachra

Leslie Hager-Smith

Edward Lawhorn

#### ***Council***

Susan Anderson  
(incumbent)

Lauren Colliver

Ken Jones

Susan Mattingly

#### **Mayor Biographies**



KRISHA CHACHRA — Understands balancing growth with maintaining Blacksburg's small-town soul. Born and brought up in Blacksburg, Krishna and her husband are now raising their toddler here. During her eight years on council where she served as Vice Mayor when re-elected, Krishna advocated for economic opportunity and entrepreneurs, senior housing and young professionals and was instrumental in helping First and Main and the IMAX theater.



LESLIE HAGER-SMITH — is Vice Mayor of Blacksburg, a small business owner, and a former reporter and columnist for the Roanoke Times, who champions economic and community development. She is a co-founder of Sustainable Blacksburg; and of Summer Solstice Fest. She originated the 16 Frogs Watershed arts project and is an energetic advocate for trails and bikeway connections in the region.



ED LAWHORN — I am a nearly 12-year resident of Blacksburg, serving as NRV Market Executive of Union Bank & Trust. I am a native of Oak Ridge, TN, and a graduate of Carson-Newman College. I chair the NRCC Educational Foundation and Onward NRV, am Vice chair of the Community Foundation of the NRV, and board member of Warm Hearth Inc.

## Biographies

### Town Council Candidates



**SUSAN G. ANDERSON** — senior instructor of Mathematics at Virginia Tech, was elected to Town Council in 2006 and re-elected in 2009 and 2013, serving two terms as vice mayor. She understands that effective service on Town Council requires enormous energy, organization, a keen sense of responsibility and a strong work ethic. These are traits that Susan possesses.



**LAUREN COLLIVER** — I've lived in Blacksburg since 2009 and own two local businesses — Valley Sports & Spine Clinic and Valley Active — providing patients with comprehensive medical care. My husband and I chose to settle in Blacksburg with our four children to be part of a vibrant community near nature. I grew up in northern Virginia and attended James Madison University.



**KEN JONES** — I came here in '93 from Northern Virginia to attend Virginia Tech and immediately fell in love with Blacksburg. While attending VT, I started my first business (in '96) and never left. I have always valued the small town appeal that Blacksburg has to offer and see Town Council as an opportunity to give back.



**SUSAN McDONALD MATTINGLY** — I'm a 1983 graduate of Virginia Tech and have lived in Blacksburg with my husband since 1991. We have two children. I have been actively engaged in civic life since we arrived, serving in leadership positions ranging from PTA President to President of Downtown Blacksburg, Inc. Since 2000 I have served as the Executive Director of the Lyric Theatre.

**List the three most important priorities that you would like to address if you are elected.**

### *Candidates for Mayor*

**KRISHA CHACHRA** — Addressing quality of life issues in our neighborhoods through implementing a neighborhood liaison program. Each council member will be responsible for communication with different neighborhoods in town. Much like our commercial center liaison model, our neighborhoods will have a council advocate who can bring any concerns to the attention of the rest of council and staff.

Making sure we have a strong voice in the decision process for Virginia Tech growth, traffic/transportation plans and housing strategy. In addition, I would like to revisit the Blacksburg High school property and explore any opportunities to work with the buyer. We also need to get the right kind of development on the Middle School property that leads to more foot-traffic to area businesses.

Bringing together a diverse mix of experts from our community including: town residents, the county, universities and other local organizations to tackle important issues. Priorities include addressing business-friendly interaction, sustainability, parking, density, zoning, affordable housing and the growth of Virginia Tech. I'm a connector and have established a broad base of solid relationships. We need to solve problems together.

**LESLIE HAGER-SMITH** — Thoughtful Development: By this, I mean new projects that respect the town's history and which are sensitive to its character. We can get improved results by making our permitting and inspections more transparent, predictable and timely; by offering incentives for green building (carrots, not sticks); and by supporting our staff as they transition to on-line, real time reports for builders.

Regional Partnerships: A generous regard for our neighbors will be crucial to extend rail service, improve roads, expand broadband; and attract retailers. With Virginia Tech, I want to explore the concept of an “academic village” in town limits. I will also initiate a “domestic study abroad” program, pairing leaders and students from Blacksburg with those from more distressed Appalachian communities.

Community Attachment: Let’s finish the Huckleberry Trail and create uniform landscaping at the entrances to welcome users; pledge public monies to create plazas, a park and a splash pool for residents at the OBMS; invite each of Blacksburg’s 26 neighborhoods to the podium twice yearly, during council meetings; and sponsor “slow rides” through our streets for citizens and elected representatives.

ED LAWHORN — Ensuring all neighborhoods are represented by town council: With five of seven council members living within a half mile of town hall and town elections being lightly opposed or unopposed, complacency has set in regarding neighborhood outreach. Neighborhood visibility and being proactive—attending HOA meetings, neighborhood forums, town halls—is key to reversing that and insuring every Blacksburg neighborhood is represented by town council.

Improving local government relationships, especially with Montgomery County: The town’s relationship with Montgomery County has been deteriorating for several years, related to the middle-and-school properties. I maintain working relationships with NRV local governments, know Montgomery County leadership, and I provide the avenue to reset the relationship for the future. We can advocate for Blacksburg with any of our neighbors, disagree, but not be disagreeable.

Reversing the town’s business unfriendly reputation: Blacksburg’s reputation as being business unfriendly is fact. While portrayed as being related to the development community, it’s broader than that—it affects homeowners and small business, and results in lost opportunity. Focus groups and committees won’t resolve it. Town council must charge our town manager, our CEO, with developing a plan and leading the effort to change our reputation.

### *Candidates for Town Council*

SUSAN G. ANDERSON — Wise management of growth and development to ensure both economic viability and community livability: Development and redevelopment should be guided by our shared community values and managed by adherence to zoning ordinances and our Comprehensive Plan’s vision. Directing growth toward clustering and infill to preserve green space should be encouraged. Public and alternative transportation are necessary components of sustainable growth.

The continued revitalization of our historic downtown as a pedestrian friendly, vibrant retail and arts center:

A thriving town core is essential to both the health and the character of Blacksburg. Appropriate development of the old Blacksburg Middle School site and the future redevelopment of the Blacksburg Baptist Church property are critical to this goal.

Promoting diverse housing options while protecting the integrity of existing neighborhoods: A diverse community has diverse housing needs. To attract and support working families, young professionals, retirees, and our student population, Blacksburg needs housing appropriate for all income levels and lifestyles. Guarding our neighborhoods against encroachment and decay is vital to a high quality of life for all residents.

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LAUREN COLLIVER — Support for small business and entrepreneurs is key to maintaining Blacksburg's unique character.

Let's simplify regulations for starting new businesses and focus on growth for our existing businesses. Blacksburg's relationships with Montgomery County and Virginia Tech are vital to our continued success. Our Town Council has an opportunity to reshape those relationships to be more open and positive. Maintaining our town's green space and encouraging environmental protection.

KEN JONES — Downtown: I would like to see more people living and working in downtown. Infrastructure improvements for traffic and parking will be needed, while continuing to explore means of alternative transportation.

Managed growth: As a business owner I welcome the growth. However, it will be a challenge to manage the growth that is coming and not lose our small town appeal.

Better Town-County Relations.

SUSAN McDONALD MATTINGLY — Protecting neighborhoods—Virginia Tech is growing. A large influx of new students will put a strain on some neighborhoods. It's essential that we enforce current occupancy requirements. We also need to work with developers to help them build or rehab student housing in the areas of town best suited for more dense development—and help them to do it sustainably.

Fostering a vibrant business community—We need to explore strategies to retain, grow and recruit businesses. This includes providing adequate infrastructure, whether it's parking facilities, or robust broadband. Broadband has become an essential utility. We must be responsive to their needs if we want to bring the next generation's entrepreneurs to Blacksburg and to grow our tax base.

Building Collaborative Relationships—In order to have good relationships, we must first build mutual trust. This requires listening to constituents and stakeholders with an open mind. It's also essential to be transparent and responsive to their concerns. When we work together to find common ground we can find creative solutions to our challenges.