

Candidate Responses – Orange County Board of Supervisors

Laird J. Knights

Question 1: Position Seeking:

LK: Supervisor

Question 2: Have You Previously Held this Position?

LK: No

Question 3: Will you be attending the August 23, 2023, Orange County Candidate Showcase?

LK: Yes

Question 4: What is your plan for fostering business growth in the community for the next 5 years?

LK: Provide CTE (continued technical education) for high school students and older adults while establishing a pathway for employment with existing business in the county, making roads safer, building up required infrastructure in desired areas such as reservoirs, pipelines, etc, and lowering of taxes where applicable if possible.

Question 5: According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Orange County has nearly 100,000 acres of farmland, and is home to approximately 417 farms of all sizes and types. How do you envision your role can best support all types of agricultural operations?

LK: Expand zoning of agricultural land where possible, see how the old Rapidan Mill can become viable for business use to produce flour, expand incentives for the different types of industries related to livestock agriculture such as a local tannery, a mill for making cloth, and biomedical industries. Give incentives to local farms while also providing opportunities for work for high school students and working age adults. The ultimate goal being having Orange county become as self-sufficient as possible.

Question 6: What specific steps do you believe could be taken by the Board of Supervisors, other county officials, or others in the county to help the county attract businesses that will improve the economic well-being of the county without a negative impact upon the quality of life for the county citizens?

LK: Work hand in hand with the chamber of commerce to highlight tourism and our hospitality sectors, provide tax incentives, encouraging sound conservation practice when building housing or commercial buildings, trying to keep as much of the existing natural flora in place, while trying to minimize the impact on existing wildlife while maintaining the agricultural setting of Orange, providing forested setbacks around building areas, provide properly sized safe roads, remediation of polluted areas, and infrastructure related to reservoirs while maintaining and improving clean water sources.

Question 7: What steps do you think are most important to support existing businesses and encourage healthy growth?

LK: Provide a soundly trained workforce through CTE programs, limit taxation where possible, provide improved infrastructure, and building another sheriff's office and high school in the center or eastern end of the county.

Question 8: How do agriculture and forestry contribute to your vision for economic growth and development within the County?

LK: Agriculture is the shining jewel of Orange County. The many agricultural industries such as farms that produce corn, wheat, soybeans, alfalfa, grapes for wineries, corn or wheat for distilleries, our horse farms for breeding of horses and preservation of the equestrian arts, our livestock farms which produce cattle for production of beef or dairy farms for milk, pig farming for production of pork, sheep for wool and mutton, and poultry for production of meat and eggs. Our logging industries are one of the few long term industries that have a sharp eye on preserving the land for the future while fostering future growth of a renewable resource for construction, paper production, and other various industries.

Additionally, each of these agricultural sectors coupled with Future Farmers of America (FFA), 4-H, and CTE educational programs in concert with our schools are essential to the future of the county.

Question 9: How do you define "social justice" and, from your perspective, how can the BOS ensure fairness for all Orange County residents?

LK: Safeguard existing equal employment opportunity (EEO) requirements, that people of all races are treated fairly and equally compensated for their work done, while ensuring that all young people from different walks of life are able to receive an education and pathway to success to serve their communities future needs.
