

**Opening statement:** I'm excited to be here today to discuss the policies I would like to address when I'm elected supervisor and to help the residents of Honey Brook Township to get to know me better. I'm a 24-year resident of Honey Brook Township and a mother of two grown children who went to Twin Valley schools. I grew up in a small rural community in Luzerne County and am passionate about keeping our community rural, affordable and safe. I am currently an elected auditor and was elected as a Republican Committee Person last year for Precinct 300. I've held many leadership positions throughout my career and have managed multi-million-dollar budgets in my career as a Toxicologist. I'm a registered Republican who lost the primary by 20 votes but won the Democrat and popular vote count. I have widespread bipartisan support because the issues that I would like to address as Supervisor are nonpartisan...responsible fiscal management, safety and preservation of open space. I have been asked why I'm running for Honey Brook Township Supervisor. The answer is clear. This is my home. I want to retire here. I want my grandchildren to visit me here and maybe God willing, my children will choose to raise their families here.

1-2 minutes/question

**1) Fiscal responsibility: Do you see problems with spending at the Township? What would be your solutions? The claim has been that they have a balanced budget. What are your concerns.**

- a. The budget is balanced but the spending is not. The budget is projected based on what is coming in. The township is spending more than what is budgeted and is outpacing revenue by over 2 fold I have seen what I would classify as frivolous expenses and lack of project oversight that is contributing to the increase in expenses. An example of what I refer to as a frivolous expense is approximately \$70,000 on a new audio/visual system and \$30,000, for three 70-inch flat screen TVs, one of which has yet to make it through a meeting without failing and is used to follow the agenda during meetings. I also think that we need better project planning and oversight to reduce unnecessary expenses. A perfect example is the skatepark. With better long term planning, we would have prevented water retention from damaging the concrete. We would have predicted the impact of reducing parking on the use of the park and we would have prevented the need to completely redo the park at tax payer expense.

We need a Supervisor who serves as a leader. Currently our Board of Supervisors appears to defer to the Manager when ultimate accountability sits with the Supervisors. I also think that we need better project planning and oversight to reduce unnecessary expenses.

**2) Safety: You have spoken about issues with safety. What are your concerns about safety in our Township? You have spoken about getting a police force and how do you expect to pay for that?**

- a. Since the township disbanded the police department in 2005 we have seen hypodermic needles found at Umble Park along with destruction of park facilities, cars broken into in the township, theft and most recently an arrest for sexual assault of a minor. In addition, we see an increase in traffic accidents as more cars go faster through town, compromising the safety of our residents. According to state police we have one officer assigned to our township and west Nantmeal Township. That is one trooper for over 10,000 residents and leads to longer response times when residents need police support. (The average is two officers for every 1,000 residents.). I believe we should look at ways to improve community safety by looking at available options such as contracting police officers or regionalizing with other local departments to supplement state police. And we would consider these options not by raising taxes but by rationalizing how each option could fit within the current budget.

**3) Overdevelopment and impact on infrastructure: You have voiced concerns about overdevelopment and the impact on our infrastructure in Honey Brook Township. What are your concerns and how do you propose they are addressed?**

- a. There is increasing strain on the roads, sewer system and electrical system. The roads are showing signs of breaking down from the increased traffic, sewer lines are reaching capacity, and the electrical grid is becoming strained. Two years ago, we updated the housing ordinance for the Township that was more permissive to developers. We need to hold developers accountable for their impact on our infrastructure and we need to stop providing approval for variances from these development requirements. Every large development in the last 4 years has received approval for a variance from the building requirements in our township.

**4) Environmental concerns: What are your immediate environmental concerns in Honey Brook Township?**

- a. Recently Caernarvon Township passed an ordinance protecting their residents and the environment from the potential hazards associated with a co-digesters. Co-digestion is a process where food waste and animal waste are combined for the purpose of producing methane, a renewable energy source. Unfortunately, there are also hazardous by-products from this process that can get into our drinking water and food supply. While Caernarvon has protected its residents, Honey Brook does not have the same protections. As supervisor I would work

with the board to draft similar protections so co digestors do not come to Honey Brook and compromise our community, our children and our water and food supplies.

**5) Transparency and Accountability. It's the most overused term in politics. What is not transparent about the current administration?**

- a. If I can sum up the attitude of the current board of supervisors to residents with one word, it would be disdain with refusal by them to answer even the simplest question. Just watch a supervisors meeting on Honeybrookfreshair on YouTube to see how residents are treated who voice concerns or ask questions. We are one of the few Townships with no newsletter, no workshops, townhalls, and questions at Supervisors meeting have been reduced to a 3 min period at the beginning of the meeting before any items have been discussed. Information that used to be provided to the public opening such as employee salaries now require RTK requests. When one resident came to a meeting pleading for Supervisors to reach out to PennDOT to urge them to repair Cambridge Road, the Supervisor said, 'what exactly do you expect me to do?'. The answer is 'we want our board of supervisors to be the residents advocate'. After a great deal of frustration that was expressed by residents, the Supervisors reached out to Rep Dan Williams office and the potholes were repaired. It's not a long-term solution but why did it take such frustration on the part of residents to get the Supervisors to act? I want residents to be reassured that issues or concerns won't get ignored and dismissed, which is what I've heard from too many residents. My opponent has said that my questions at supervisors' meetings are asked to make them feel stupid. This is sad that the board would view well intentioned questions on ordinances, budgets and other agenda items as attacks. Our Township needs Supervisors who are leaders who respectfully address questions and concerns. This is 'the peoples' government. Supervisors are bestowed with the 'privilege' of representing the residents. How do they represent us if they don't listen to us? I also think that residents should be allowed to complete an annual performance review for Supervisors and employees. Feedback is important to hold everyone.

**Resident Questions:**

- 1) **How do you see the current board members and yourself working together if you are elected? Compare this to how you see yourself working with the current board if your opponent is elected.**

- a. **My answer:** I would like to find common ground and work from there. For example, we both agree that the land preservation program is a good thing. I just want to ensure that more landowners who are eligible learn about the program and are encouraged to apply and that we have a clear proposal with milestones for ending the program. It is clear that there are many things we don't align on and on those issues I will present an alternative view point. I aim to discuss my views with them in a respectful manner and hope that they will keep an open mind and consider my proposals. If my opponent wins the election, I will continue to stay engaged and provide input at meetings to ensure that the board is keeping the residents' best interests in mind.
- 2) What plans do you have to unite our Township and show the residents that it is ok to approach their local government with thoughts, ideas and comments?**
- a. **Another similar question was that many residents feel like they don't have a voice and are at times rudely dismissed for asking questions and are only given 3 minutes to talk. What will you do as a supervisor to support the community having a voice in our township?**
  - b. **My answer:** I would like to reinstitute the workshops on a regular basis, town hall meetings on a quarterly basis and township newsletters. I will ensure that I am respectful of residents' comments and questions at meetings and on social media. I will also do my best to provide residents with an answer to a question or resolution to a concern.
- 3) The current projections in Township spending shows we are reaching a spending threshold. What ideas do you have to cut back on spending?**
- a. **My answer:** I can commit to being more engaged in expenditures and will provide input on expenditures that are not absolutely necessary and suggest options for repair or purchasing at a lower cost. I also believe that better project oversight and long term planning can help to reduce unnecessary expenditures. I think it will also be important to gain a better understanding of where there is unnecessary spending when I am elected. As a resident, there is not a lot of transparency around spending within the budget.
- 4) What is the taxpayer money being spent on specifically and how much for each listing?**
- a. **My answer:** The 5 general areas of highest growth in expenses are: Public works staff costs, public safety, public works equipment, community contributions and administrative staff costs. The township hired one person a few years ago to replace Don Jonson when he retires. Public safety includes an increase in code enforcement (new construction and perceived increase in small business and resident enforcement). We also hired a new administrative assistant and gave a substantial raise to the manager in 2022.

**5) In 2022, it was brought to light that the planning commission and board of supervisors were going to allow development within a high-quality wetland buffer. This would violate PA chapter 93 water quality standards. What practices or plans would you implement to ensure this would never happen again?**

a. **My answer:** I mentioned to the board in 2021 that the special exception and variance criteria need to be revised with more defined requirements. This would ensure that the applicants are providing the appropriate information. It would also be helpful to reexamine the environmentally sensitive areas throughout the township that zoning needs to be reassessed.

**6) How many people have to die before a light is placed at an intersection?**

a. **My answer:** I am assuming that you are referring to Chestnut Tree road and 322 or Birdell and 322. The short answer is if you encounter any issues with line of sight or traffic issues please report the intersection. No one should have to die to take action. First, if you notice a dangerous intersection that is on a state road you should report it to PennDot and follow up with the Township as well. Secondly, I have been advocating with Rep Dan Williams office since 2022 to get a light at Chestnut Tree Road and 322. It lies at the intersection of 3 Townships. Rep Dan Williams was coordinating this effort when Honey Brook Township told them that they were negotiating with DR Horton to install the light as part of their plan to build along 322. This has meant that nothing has been done since then. When DR Horton came back to the planning committee this past spring, I asked for the planning committee to also place Birdell in scope because it is so dangerous and they did.

**7) Why are we paying for land preservation but so many developments seem to be built? How many farms have been developed?**

a. **My answer:** The land preservation program is a voluntary program that pays approximately \$5-7,000/acre. With land prices being so high in recent years, it's more appealing to sell to a developer. I personally think that we could do better promoting the program. However, it is voluntary. I think we also need to make it lucrative to farms to continue farming. We need to consider growers markets and inform farmers of state grants and programs that can assist.

**8) Is there a magic number of residents to warrant 1 full time and 1 part time police officer without raising taxes?**

a. **My answer:** I am not aware of a magic number of residents that would trigger increased police coverage. There have been discussions ongoing with the BOS since 2015 to enhance policing in the township with 2 of 3 supervisors having rejected every proposal. I hope that if I am elected, we can examine the options for enhancing police coverage WITHIN our current budget.

Closing statement: 1-2 minutes

Thank you for watching this debate. The residents now see from this event today the issues that I will address as supervisor should the voters agree with what I believe in. Again, I will be one of three supervisors and supervisors enact change by majority vote. I value, respect (both in person and online) and demand transparency, accountability by your government and open dialogue with residents. Conversations with residents have the ability to create a better local government and stronger community for all, not just a select few.

My opponent chose not to attend the debate, which I find to be a shame, especially after the assassination of Charlie Kirk. Mr. Kirk's basic premise was to engage in open dialogue and debate with people you disagree with politically in order to decrease violence and engage in the most valuable form of democracy. By not talking to the public in a televised forum, and not taking questions asked by a moderator my opponent prevented residents from hearing from him how he stands on important issues and how he will respond to viewpoints that he doesn't agree with. I vow to work with the current board of supervisors to the best of my abilities to ensure that residents feel heard, respected and valued. I will be your voice. I will represent you. I want to keep your taxes low, preserve open space and ensure safety in our community. Most importantly I want to ensure that Honey Brook remains affordable by being more fiscally responsible. My dedication to those points has never wavered and is well memorialized in township meeting videos on "Honey Brook Fresh Air" YouTube channel, no matter what my opponent claims. The actual video simply doesn't lie. I hope that after the election we can come together as a community...regardless of the outcome of this election.

I commit to keeping our community both rural and safe. Please remember, I am a registered Republican on the Democrat ballot because I won the Democrat election in the primary. The reason 48.5% of all Republican voters as well as the majority of all Democrat voters cast their votes for me is simple. The electors of both Parties KNOW that I am the best candidate to unify our residents and make Honey Brook a stronger, safer, and more fiscally responsible Township. Make sure to vote Valerie Shultz for Honey Brook Township Supervisor on Tuesday, Nov 4