

Preserving Everyone's Hometown

Why Media needs Conservationist Republicans on Borough Council

Why does Media need Republicans on Council? To bring balance. Republicans have been and will continue to be the minority party in Media Borough. As Republicans, we concede that it is unlikely that Borough council will be comprised of a Republican majority anytime soon, yet conservatives still make up a significant percentage of our community and need a voice in our local government - a voice they currently don't have. We can all agree that a healthy democracy cannot be attained through an entrenched one-party system and that true progress is attained through a balanced and diverse representation of ideas and positions. To govern effectively, the Council needs Republicans to bring opposing viewpoints and new solutions to be considered. It's our hope that the residents of Media vote for at least one Republican for Council to bring about that balance.

We are *Conservationist* Republicans and here is our platform...

Open space conservation begins with early and smart policy making. Unfortunately, most of the open space in our community has already been developed, leaving us few options for preserving what few parcels are left. Advocacy groups hoping for last minute intervention by Media Borough to purchase open space at a premium price from developers, *after* plans for development have been submitted, will continue to be disappointed unless policy changes can be implemented now.

Most of the remaining large sub-dividable lots in Media are those with historic homes on them built prior to 1920. Inevitably, these will be the next targets for further subdivision and development. As integral parts of the character and history of this town, our goal should be to preserve our historic buildings and prevent them from falling into disrepair or being demolished. We propose setting up two programs to be funded through a combination of open space grants, tax credits and an open space fund. The first program would allow homeowners to voluntarily apply for a historic designation on their property in exchange for property tax relief and be subject to the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB). The second program would allow homeowners to voluntarily apply for a refundable tax credit in exchange for a conservation easement that would limit the right to subdivide the property in the future. This would give property owners much needed funds to preserve both the home and the property for generations to come. How would we pay for this?... with an Open Space Fund.

The Borough needs an Open Space fund and a means of funding it. While grants are certainly a great way to procure funds for projects and should be heavily pursued, they are often for very specific uses and take significant time to procure. A line item on the budget requires taxpayer funding through increased taxes or a reduction in a budget elsewhere. We propose a more general use fund, where funding would come from the permit fees and zoning review fees on approved applications for subdivision, which would provide for conservation easements, property acquisitions, improvements, and maintenance of open space. Let's have the developers, who profit off the open space of the Borough, pay for the Open Space fund, not the residents. One solution would be to institute a \$5000 mandatory contribution to an Open Space fund per new housing unit created. Example: a developer who wants to build a 30-unit apartment building in Media would be required to contribute \$150,000 to the fund or one that wants to subdivide a large single-family property into 3 singles and 4 twins would be required

to make a \$35,000 contribution. If this had been implemented even just a few years ago, we'd have a fund in excess of a million dollars for green space preservation paid for 100% by developers.

Hybrid form-based zoning is not the answer to our development problems. Form-based zoning could potentially accelerate development in Media while simultaneously giving greater control over the "form" of all structure to the zoning committee. Media is comprised of an eclectic variety of property forms, types and styles – it's what makes our town so unique. An attempt to make our homes "fit-in" to a subjective vision of what our town should look like is unduly restrictive to our individual property freedoms. We don't need a new zoning code, we need smart and thoughtful improvements to the current one. Zoning codes need to be enforced as written and improved upon where necessary. Parking and stormwater management will continue to be issues and it's vital to ensure all future developments both provide sufficient parking AND do not exceed impervious surface requirements. Variances should be approved sparingly with new development and reserved for its intended application with existing structures and "grandfathered" existing property conditions. Zoning and development are complex problems that often require complex solution; however, that is no excuse for the inability to solve them. Consultants are not a substitute for effective leadership and decision making.

Media's stormwater management plan adopted in 2017 estimates infrastructure spending of \$13,000,000 in the "Phase 1" plan. How are we, as a town, going to fund these improvements? It's time we address infrastructure in a big way. This problem needs to be addressed with decisive and effective action along with smart policy making that encourages stormwater management on an individual property level. Refundable tax credits for reducing impervious coverage or implementing stormwater management techniques could help ease flooding in areas and reduce the overall cost of the plan. Maintenance of our existing drainage system also needs to be of paramount importance. It's frustrating to see the street drains flood with every heavy rain – they're clogged and need to be cleaned out! Sometimes the simple solutions can be the most effective.

Creating affordable housing in Media begins with keeping property taxes under control. Government's primary responsibility is to the residents that live here. Wealth creation through increased property values is a great thing for our residents – increased cost of living is not! The county-wide reassessment brought about by our current County administration has led to increased property taxes for a great number of property owners in the Borough. There has been little to nothing said about this fact among current Borough leadership. These tax increases are forcing long-time residents on lower incomes and older homeowners on fixed incomes to sell their properties, as well as preventing first time home buyers from affording property in the Borough. Increased property taxes will quickly exacerbate the problem of affordable housing by driving up monthly mortgage payments at a pace as fast as recent home value appreciation – a \$2400 annual increase in taxes has the same impact on a 30-year mortgage payment as mortgaging \$50,000 more for a home, based on current 30-year interest rates (each would cost roughly \$200/month more). This will drive up rents as well. Our goal will be to prevent any further tax increases and identify areas to reduce budgetary spending to reduce future taxes. In the private sector we diligently watch expenses and improve efficiencies to reduce costs without sacrificing the quality of the final product – our government must constantly be doing the same. The Borough needs to eliminate wasteful spending, especially on lawsuits regarding Broomall's Lake.

Broomall's Lake and the 3rd St Bridge issues need to be resolved once and for all. The 3rd St bridge has been shut down for 25 years and there is a long-standing court order to rebuild the dam and

two-way street. The current lakebed and Broomall Lakes Swim Club (BLSC) property is also one of the most significant pieces of open space in Media and it allows for development by right based on zoning. The Council has already attempted to take illegitimate and inappropriate action to rezone the property as MERC, which led to a lawsuit and the resulting withdrawal of the rezoning attempt. How much longer will our town financially injure BLSC? While most residents do not want the dam built and don't want new development on the property, there are few options left if a new agreement is not reached soon. We would diligently work to reach another agreement. Regardless of whether the dam, bridge or walking bridge is built or not, if BLSC becomes financially insolvent it is highly likely the remaining developable property, whether lakebed or lakefront, will be sold for development. We believe a deal could be made in which Media Borough can help save the swim club by purchasing the entire BLSC property at current market value with municipal bond financing, permanently deeding the property as a swim club, and leasing back the property to BLSC through a long-term land lease so they can continue to operate it. This would preserve the open space of the lake (or lakebed) and provide BLSC with significant funds to maintain/renovate/expand the existing swim club and preserve this important historical asset of our community. The land lease payments would cover the interest on the municipal bond, resulting in a net-zero cost to taxpayers.

There has been a push to conserve other properties from development with no avail. It would be a great and wonderful thing if Media Real Estate's property on State Street near Barrall Field could be preserved, but it is very hard to finance the acquisition of such a large and expensive parcel at the eleventh hour after development plans have already been submitted. While some may make speeches and promises to try to save properties like this from development, the reality is that conservation must happen much earlier in the process. We won't make false promises to get votes. This parcel will likely be developed as planned due to inaction, which will come as a harsh truth to some. Yet to those that move there and join our community, this development will bring a new home and new opportunities in this great town that we love. We must remember, development serves an important function in our community and has the capacity to make our great town even better when properly done. New homeowners bring in more revenue for both local businesses and the Borough to keep our community prosperous.

Small business is the life-blood of our community. We need to support them by creating a pro-business environment. The best way to support businesses is to bring people into town to spend money. The last thing we should be doing is cancelling outdoor events that bring in hundreds of people or mandating specific operations of businesses in town. The Media 5 Miler was switched from in-person to virtual and Town Talk cancelled Super Sunday to the severe detriment of our town with no attempts by our leadership to save them. Small businesses should be promoted, not restricted. The MBA needs to expand upon current marketing campaigns to promote the town and co-op advertising with local businesses will help to bolster those that have suffered through the last eighteen months of this pandemic. Empty store fronts are becoming more and more common. Local on State St is that latest business to close due to reduced revenues from the pandemic – we need to turn this around quickly.

Shade trees are essential to the look and feel of our borough and something that we can and should start on immediately. Canopy trees provide shade against urban heat island effect and essential habitat for birds and animals in town. Council should support increasing the shade tree budget. We believe increases in a budget should be offset with cost savings in other areas or increased revenues

and, in this case, we believe it can be offset with grants, savings on tree surgeon costs, and soliciting local businesses and individuals to sponsor trees around the Borough.

Parking is and will continue to be a growing problem in the Borough. A significant amount of vehicular traffic in town is associated with the courthouse. The county-owned parking garage and adjoining building were torn down years ago with no immediate plans for reconstruction. These gravel lots that are currently serving no purpose could immediately be utilized as parking lots with minimal additional efforts. Council should work to secure the use of these lots for vehicle parking while the properties remain in limbo and push the county to build a parking garage not only for the courthouse personnel, but for public use as well to accommodate downtown shoppers and other event traffic like Dining under the Stars.

Media Borough residents need to do more to support our local police and fire departments. Our brave men and women that put on the uniform every day to make our community safe deserve the respect and support of that community. We enjoy the benefits of a 100% volunteer fire department that relies on donations and supporters to fund these critical services; however, giving is down and it's not cutting it. As a town we need to raise the awareness of these budget deficits and encourage ALL property owners to freely make donations to the Fire Department. If we cannot shift the tide and increase giving, then we will be forced to establish more permanent funding for these services through tax revenue. If elected, we pledge to donate 100% of any compensation received from the Council position to Media's Emergency Services. We also support the addition of bodycams for all officers in the Borough so that the actions of both the officers, and the defendants, can be fairly reviewed and judged given the current climate.

It's time to look toward the future and what that may hold for this town that we all love.

We CAN achieve conservation and preservation with smart policy making

We CAN keep housing affordable by reducing taxes

We CAN achieve greater safety and security by supporting our emergency services

We encourage any Media resident that reads my platform to reach out to us personally to discuss it if they wish - we would love to sit down with you and get to know you better. Candid and personal discussions on a front porch or back patio tend to produce more positive discourse and results than social media posts or contentious public meetings. As it's not possible to please all people all the time, we may not see eye to eye on every subject; however, we promise that if elected to Borough Council we will listen to your viewpoints and thoughts with an open mind, represent all residents as fairly and transparently as we can, fervently uphold the constitution of this country, and will make ourselves accessible to all the residents of this Borough.

Sincerely,

John Cunningham, Michael Straw, Kelly Sides, Richard Micun, Candidates for Borough Council

Kevin Kellogg, Candidate for Mayor