

# League of Women Voters of Elmhurst Candidate Forum Questions – County Board District 1

## **Ashley Selmon (D)**

**1. The following resolution will be included on the November 6th York Township ballot: "Shall our Representatives and Senators in the U.S. Congress sponsor and/or support measures that will address the serious threat posed by climate change?" Do you support or oppose the resolution, and why?**

I support this resolution. Globally, addressing climate change is essential. Our County-level elected officials must also address the serious threats posed by climate change. Issues of flooding in our neighborhoods, especially in parts of District 1, remind us all that climate change affects everyone, not just those who live near an ocean.

**2. League of Women Voters has taken a stand to eliminate township government. Do you have a plan to increase county government efficiency while maintaining quality services and infrastructure through consolidation and shared services? Please explain your plan.**

Consolidating duplicative units of government and streamline services can save the County and taxpayers money and provide better service. Consolidation efforts lead by the DuPage County Board have publicized projected savings of \$100M but evidence of these savings has not been publicized nor is it reflected in near-term budgetary projections.

I would work to expedite this work and increase transparency so we as residents can better understand what savings have thus far been realized and ensure we are efficient in the future. The efficient consolidation of the election commission into the clerk's office must continue and be a transparent process. Another area of consolidation that should be explored is abolishing the recorder's office. As a county we should examine why we have an office which is not required by the Illinois constitution and that our fellow collar counties have eliminated without reductions in services.

To improve these two specific cases, transparency around planning and cost savings must be increased to county residents. These issues, and any others, must also be considered with urgency, not simply reviewed during election years with action delayed until it is politically helpful for the ruling party.

**3. According to Forbes Magazine (7/25/17 issue) DuPage County had over 200**

**employees earning over \$100,000. Annually. The report states a top staffer with an annual salary of \$201,750. Do you have a plan to reduce personnel costs?**

We must start with the salaries of elected officials and political appointees to save taxpayer funds and to ensure our financial health in the years to come. I support a 10 year salary freeze for County Board members – DuPage County Board members are the highest compensated in the state for part time work. A pay freeze would allow for these positions to continue being paid, which is important to ensuring that anyone can serve regardless of personal finances, while allowing the excessive salaries to normalize over time. Similarly, I support eliminating health care benefits for part-time elected officials. Many board members work at other jobs, or own their own companies, in addition to their board service. Taxpayers should not pay for health care for elected officials and their families who have other alternative ways to obtain care through their private employment. Elected officials must serve as an example and see their own salaries reduced as a first course of action

**4. County activities are often opaque to the average citizen and most do not even know what district they are in. What is your vision for better communication to show more accountability and transparency to your constituents?**

Transparency in board practices and decision making and access to local elected officials are two areas lacking in the current board leadership.

Meetings are held during the work day on Tuesdays, when many District 1 residents cannot attend and make their voices heard. Decisions about spending taxpayer funds are made with little public oversight, with little explanation offered during full board meetings. I will fight for easily accessible publication of recordings of committee meetings and adjusted meeting schedules so there are more times when community members can attend meetings.

Furthermore, I will communicate with residents of District 1 to solicit their advice and explain why I vote. I admire the example of Member Liz Chaplin (DuPage County Board, District 2) who often posts on her website about topics being discussed by the board and information which will help her constituents. I will also continue attending community events and would want to hold community meetings with constituents year round, not just during election years.

**5. As part of the strategic plan the county must foster the continued growth of its economy. Ensure DuPage County residents have competitive job skills. Foster economic growth and development. Champion DuPage County as a desirable place in which to live and work. What are your suggestions for fulfilling this plan?**

Working with towns within DuPage County and in the collar counties to draw green jobs and tech-friendly industries, such as data storage facilities, will grow our tax base while also expanding job opportunities to DuPage County residents. In District 1, development related to the O'Hare expansion can be a significant source of revenue; the DuPage County Board must be a leader in this project to ensure that economic benefits are felt in DuPage, not just in neighboring Cook County. The board can also support local businesses by ending no-bid contracts and working to open up the contract bid process. Bringing new businesses to DuPage and encouraging the growth of businesses already in our county should be a top priority for elected members.