

Lexington Herald-Leader Voter Guide
General Election
Hannah LeGris
Urban County Council, District Three
Received Wednesday, September 2
Due Monday, September 14

**Five questions (questions 3-8) after age are limited to 500 characters.

**Every question after campaign contributors to the end (questions 9-19) are limited to 1,000 characters.

Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council - District 3

Thank you for completing our candidate questionnaire. Your answers will be published in our voter guide and may be lightly edited for spelling and grammar. Our goal is to help voters understand candidates' views on important policy issues.

Email address *

hannah@hannahforcouncil.com

Age as of November 3, 2020 *

34

Campaign website *

www.hannahforcouncil.com

Occupation *

Career and Personal Development Counselor at the University of Kentucky

Education *

MA, English Literature, University of Kentucky
BA, English Literature, The College of Wooster

Have you run for elected office before? (Please list previous offices sought) *

No

Please list highlights of your civic involvement:

I currently serve on the Board of Directors for the International Book Project, the Women's Forum at UK, and civic education nonprofit CivicLex. I taught creative writing with the Swallowtail Project for incarcerated women, and raised funds for the Kentucky Health Justice Network. Since 2012 I have taught a range of service learning courses at UK, and I strive to engage students with the world around them and connect them with community organizations and leadership opportunities.

Who are your top three campaign contributors?

Debra Hensley
Jim Gray
Kimberly Huffman

What is the most pressing issue facing your council district and what would you do to address it?

In the coming months and years we will need to overcome a huge economic crisis and budgetary shortfall. While much of our focus needs to be directed toward maintaining essential operations, it is also imperative that we support local businesses and make strategic investments to keep people employed, healthy, and safe.

Since the COVID-19 shutdown, city leadership has worked hard to keep the Affordable Housing Fund solvent and provide financial resources for residents who are housing insecure. The next step should be allocating funds to help local businesses and their employees. If elected, I will work to direct state and federal dollars to a local business fund, giving more options for those most at-risk. It is critical to create opportunities to help residents stay employed, not only because of housing and health-insurance, but also to keep Lexington financially stable.

Why are you the best candidate for this position?

Right now we need leaders with integrity, people with broad experience who can commit their time to deliver real solutions for the community. I am running for Third District Council because I am invested in making Lexington more inclusive, economically resilient, and keeping our residents safe and supported. My story centers around community building and social justice. I began my career as an AmeriCorps VISTA at the Carnegie Center, where I first learned about some of the racial, social, and economic divisions within our community. As your council member I will work to protect what makes our city special as we persevere toward a more fair and equitable future. I want to draw on my wide-ranging experience in the educational, non-profit, and private sectors to build trust, cut through barriers that separate people, and find common ground to make a difference in peoples' lives as we address the many challenges facing our society.

Should the city permanently ban the use of no-knock warrants? Explain your answer.

The death of Breonna Taylor in Louisville was a pointless and avoidable tragedy that has drawn national attention to the use of no-knock warrants. Like many law enforcement tactics, no-knock warrants are only as effective as the processes and people implementing them. According to Chief Weathers, Lexington Police Department's use of no-knock warrants has been fairly limited over the last three years.

I believe that, at best, no-knock warrants should be executed rarely and with extreme caution. As councilmember, I will review the warrant approval process and work with public safety and legal officials to determine the best way to keep Lexington residents safe and respect basic civil liberties. In the meantime, I want to put safeguards in place to make sure that no-knock warrants are only applied in life-or-death situations where there is extremely strong evidence for their use.

What, if any, other changes are needed to improve police accountability?

During my campaign, I have spoken with members of our public safety community about social justice and their challenges as officers. I believe we have had good leadership in our police and fire departments for a number of years; however there is still much progress to be made. Public safety is most effective when it is transparent and accountable. Rather than reacting to the outcomes of injustice, I support increasing community input and taking proactive steps to make law enforcement more responsive.

If elected I want to create policies that reduce the racial disparity in policing, prioritize early interventions and wrap-around services, and hold those who abuse the public trust to account. I will work with both public safety and community partners to address homelessness, addiction, and mental health through shared services rather than first responders. We must confront issues of misbehavior and abuse immediately so that we can rebuild trust, protect people, and keep Lexington safe.

Do you support a proposed ordinance requiring owners of short-term rentals to register with the city and pay annual fees? Why or why not?

I support licensing and registering short-term rentals with the city because clear guidelines will allow LFUCG to better support neighborhoods, city finances, and quality of life for residents everywhere. I believe that by using tried-and-true practices from other municipalities, we can create reasonable annual fees based upon a clear, common-sense definition of 'short-term rental'.

I have spoken with many concerned citizens throughout the Third District and we need to make sure that as we develop and grow our city, we keep the focus on the needs of residents. Regulating short-term rentals will allow us to encourage liveability, maintain neighborhood health, responsibly manage property, and enforce the zoning code properly.

There has been a spike in teen gun violence this summer. What would you do to address teens and violence?

COVID-19 has created an unprecedented circumstance of school closures, job lay-offs, and social distancing. While teaching writing to incarcerated women, I learned about the importance of early intervention and reducing risk factors. I believe our community should work proactively to provide opportunities for teens and reduce violence. I support programs like Partners for Youth and Common Good because they reach out to young people in their own neighborhoods and use strong, evidence-based models to provide leadership and educational development.

If elected I will advocate for increased funding for LFUCG programs like Partners for Youth and develop partnerships between the city, FCPS, and community organizations. I believe we can do more to support grassroots partners who provide job skills, athletic programs, and leadership development for youth within our city. Not only will this help reduce violence, but we can empower young people to succeed and improve our community over time.

How would you grade the city's programs to address homelessness and affordable housing? What would you change, if anything, about those programs?

The LFUCG has taken broad measures to address homelessness and affordable housing through the creation of the Office of Homelessness Prevention and by funding the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Homeownership is important for building stability and household wealth and we must promote this opportunity for a wider range of residents. However there is a widening gap between homeowners and housing-insecure residents and, if elected, I will work to fully fund wrap-around social services and further develop rent protections to keep residents housed. Vice Mayor Kay has supported strategic investment through the Kentucky Housing Coalition and Council should investigate this option. I also want to develop existing programs with tools like inclusionary zoning, expanding community land trusts, and financial planning programs such as IDA accounts. Safe housing is a human right and it is critical that we address this issue intelligently and inclusively for the benefit of everyone.

Do you support tax increment financing districts? Why or why not?

Under equitable investment guidelines TIFs have the potential to be a useful tool, especially within areas that can benefit from infrastructure improvements. However TIF districts are not always accessible to the community at large, which is historically how they have been used in Lexington. Under our current reduced budget, I believe the city could make much more impactful investments, such as small grants, loans, or incentives that would have a broader and more immediate impact within the community. While I do not generally support the use of TIFs, I believe the LFUCG should avail themselves of every option for future investments and, if elected, I would research them further to see if they are appropriate as part of a larger strategy of community investment.

City leaders acknowledge that systemic racism exists in Lexington. What policies would you change to address systematic racism?

Lexington is a diverse city but racist practices remain embedded within our society. We can take meaningful steps to reduce structural inequality and discrimination in several ways, including:

- Creating sunshine policies within government for transparency to ensure that all residents are treated fairly, regardless of background, ethnicity, or orientation
- Seeking community-led review groups for local government agencies
- Continued partnerships with organizations like the Urban League, KCTC, and Workforce Development to provide education, job training, and affordable housing to help residents who have suffered from discrimination

Racism and intolerance are serious threats and it is critical that we address them head-on. If elected, I want to build public trust and ensure fair and equitable treatment for our residents. I will work to empower those who have been historically disenfranchised and deliver substantive changes to make Lexington a fair and welcoming community for everyone.

Do you support the expansion of the urban service boundary? Explain.

I do not support expanding the Urban Service Boundary. The benefits of densification are numerous and supported by many livability indices. Densification simplifies the creation and maintenance of infrastructure, increases overall energy efficiency compared to rural development, and increases the value of the local economy. If elected I will promote infill whenever feasible and advocate for equitable development by encouraging the LFUCG to incentivize under-utilized spaces within the Urban Services Boundary.

Urban areas, however, are only part of the discussion. Horse farms are a key part of the Bluegrass identity, and working horticultural farms are vital to our local food system. These local businesses help improve our community health, decrease our carbon footprint, and diversify our economy, all while increasing resilience during crises or disruptions. We must improve our development practices for the benefit of residents before we permanently change the landscape around us.