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2020 Pierce County Democrats Endorsement Questionnaire  
-Partisan Election-

Candidate name: \_\_\_\_\_ **Timothy Farrell** \_\_\_\_\_

Position sought: \_\_\_\_\_ **Pierce County Council #4** \_\_\_\_\_

Date submitted: \_\_\_\_\_ **4/10/2020** \_\_\_\_\_

**Candidate qualities and conduct:** The Pierce County Democratic Central Committee endorses and supports qualified Democrats seeking elected office. When deciding whether to recommend endorsement, the Endorsements Committee may consider the candidate’s dedication to Democratic Party values and principles, the viability of the campaign, and the candidate’s qualifications for office, among other things. Endorsed candidates are discouraged from supporting non-Democratic candidates or from supporting any candidate who doesn’t represent Democratic values. Endorsed candidates should distinguish themselves from any Democratic opponents in an objectively fair, informational, and non-confrontational fashion.

**By submitting this endorsement questionnaire, I publicly affirm:**

- I am a Democrat and will uphold Democratic Party values.
- I will abide by the above principles of conduct.

You may respond N/A (not applicable) if appropriate. Expand or decrease space as needed.

Questions

1. Why are you running for this office?

Pierce County is at a crossroads and we are facing difficult challenges in the coming years. As a former Pierce County Councilmember, I served during the great recession and worked across party lines to increase our reserve fund before the crisis struck. As a result, Pierce County was better positioned to continue to provide services. I know what it is like to make hard decisions in the best interests of the public,

Since I left the council, I have worked as a lobbyist for the Washington State PTA and as the Policy Director at a division of the WA State Department of Health. I would like to bring my education and public health expertise back to Pierce County to meet the needs of our citizens.

County government is a different animal than city government. The county is a major player in the region and can be a benefit to local cities like University Place, Fircrest, and Tacoma. We

provide public safety services to University Place and provide criminal justice services (courts, prosecuting attorney, defense bar, and jail) to all communities. We govern a community larger than the state of Rhode Island and serve 400,000 constituents in the unincorporated area. My depth of knowledge on how the county, and its budget, works will allow me to hit the ground running on my first day.

Term limits and retirements will leave only one councilmember with more than 2 years of experience on the county council. My eight years on the council will provide the council additional support from a seasoned veteran who served in a difficult time – and is prepared to make the same hard decisions again for the challenges we will face next year.

2. What are your qualifications (traditional or not) for seeking this elected office?

I am a former councilmember; having held the seat I am currently seeking. My experience in the legislature as staff and as a policy director with the Department of Health gives me a breadth of experience to address issues that the county currently faces: regional housing shortage, homelessness, a lacking behavioral health system, and rebuilding our broken economy and developing plans to meet the next public health crisis before it comes.

My career has been built on bringing disparate groups together for consensus without abandoning my Democratic values. The fact that I saw political successes while on a county council dominated by Republicans proves that I can deliver for our county regardless of which party holds power.

3. What are the 1 - 3 most important issues for your district or your elected body/office?

Six weeks ago, the answer would have been:

- 1) Rebuilding the social contract with our voters and earning their trust so we can build a better Pierce County.
- 2) Fixing our social service safety net (housing, behavioral health, homelessness).
- 3) Addressing climate change.

The events of the past six weeks changed the dynamic and now requires us to:

- 1) Creatively work with other governments to rebuild our economy by developing a Green New Deal for Pierce County
- 2) Fixing our social service safety net
- 3) Supporting transparency measures to ensure the voters understand the government's decision making and bringing them in as part of the solution.

4. Why should the Pierce County Democratic Party support you for this position, and how have you demonstrated Democratic values?

I have been an active member of the Party in Pierce County since 1997. I have worked on issues supporting transit, equal rights, fair housing, preserving the environment, expanding our job base, led efforts to unite the Pierce County Delegation around the construction and expansion of the University of Washington in Tacoma, and have worked to elect countless members of our party to state and local offices. As chair of the Pierce County Democrats, I worked to heal the wounds of the 2016 election and allowed all voices to be heard.

For the past month, I have been volunteering with local community groups to ensure that tenants are treated fairly during the shutdown and delivering food to shut in or quarantined residents. It has allowed to open my eyes to the vast amount of hardship in even the more affluent communities in our region. Ensuring that people's basic needs are met is the major tenant of the Democratic Party platform. I have lived by this credo, and will continue to do so if returned to office.

5. When elected, how will you make yourself accessible, and how would you obtain constituent input on issues and decisions?

I have been a champion doorbeller for my entire career and I intend to continue hitting the doors even after the election is over to gain knowledge on the needs of my district. Pierce County is a complicated place – there are communities underserved in every region and it takes someone with knowledge of these areas to ensure all voices are being heard.

I plan on having weekly coffee hours during my term of office in all three cities that make up the 4<sup>th</sup> District. I have an e-mail list of 10,000 people county wide from all walks of life which gives me a bit of a head start in learning challenges, successes, and needs of people in the region.

I plan on being actively involved in the Democratic Party helping fill PCO vacancies and working with PCO's to understand their communities and be a resource for their neighborhoods.

It is one thing to say, "I'll make myself available." It is quite another to know the different community groups, resources, and venues to find those constituents who have a lot to share and would normally never talk to an elected official.

6. How have you previously provided and how would you increase access and influence for people and groups that may lack them?

I once describe Pierce County as a Chrysanthemum – a flower with many petals and the near impossible task of seeing all of them clearly at once. We are a very diverse and often isolated series of communities in our county. You must be curious and willing to step outside of your comfort zone to get a clear view on how this county works and how to improve the lives of those in need.

The County Council is a full-time position, and when I was on the council, I treated it as such. The joke was, I'd attend the opening of an envelope. This is how you learn the county and interact with citizens who do not participate in the usual venues of power in our community. Most people aren't empowered because they don't feel empowered. Many people in our community also resist asking for help of pride or despair that the "powers that be" won't even try to pay attention to them.

Bringing that personal power to them is difficult, but possible if you are willing to continue to work as a public servant. I still buy used cars, I make an effort to meet everyone and anyone who seeks my counsel, and I am genuinely curious as to how my district works and what I need to do to gain the trust of the people I serve. I am running for office to empower these people and work on fostering their success. I enjoy supporting people and giving them the tools to advocate for themselves. For me, this is how you build a stronger community.

7. Do you support unrestricted access to reproductive health care for all women, including the right to abortion?

Yes.

8. What are the core functions of the elected office/body you seek; how can you improve them?

Core function of County Services is providing a criminal justice system, a behavioral health system, regional parks and trails, and municipal services for the 400,000 people who live in unincorporated Pierce County.

My goal is to promote equity, develop a peer centered behavioral health system, expand housing affordability options for all county residents, complete our network of trails, act as a partner to our local jurisdictions and tribal governments, and create a Green New Deal for our county to build our way out of the depression.

9. Please list any key endorsements.

Laurie Jinkins, Paul Pastor, Shannon Reynolds, Caroline Bellici, Mayor of University Place, Marty Campbell, Helen Myrick, former Vice President, United Way of Pierce County

IF ELECTED TO THIS POSITION (*some questions may not be applicable*):

10. What would you do to ensure that your constituents each have a truly equal and fair opportunity to succeed based on merit and effort, rather than pre-existing status or classification?

Pierce County needs transparency. We hold our council meetings in the morning and early afternoon when no one is there to question our decisions. I fought this during my tenure, and Connie Ladenburg fought it during hers. I think there is enough support now to push a change through.

Most elected officials travel within their own circle and don't really want to get their hands dirty. I'm not that kind of person. I love getting to know my constituents and, more importantly, I respect them. I have said this several times, I will attend the opening of an envelope. I understand this district and I remain open to learning more about our communities every day. Voter participation is a key word here – politicians do not pay attention to 1 of 4 or 2 of 4 voters. I want to spend the time after the election to get to know more about these occasional voters and understand their frustration with the system. Democratic voters choose not to vote – its up to the elected officials to determine why and make a real effort to meet their needs.

11. What benefits and problems come from increasing population; how would you address them?

Pierce County will be home to nearly 1 million people by 2030. Providing the infrastructure to allow them alternative workplaces, ensuring a transit system that meets their needs, and developing a plan to preserve agricultural land within our growth boundary and offering the ability to expand and develop underutilized communities can address most of our population needs.

I'll give you an example. The Town of South Prairie is located east of Orting on SR 162. It is served by an overextended sewer system which, if enhanced, could allow the town to rebuild and increase its density. Working with our rural communities to bring high speed internet services, instead of selling out our community would allow for low cost housing options and expanding the footprint of affordability and availability in Eastern Pierce County without jeopardizing scenic resources.

12. How would you support workers, including union workers, whether employed privately or by government?

When I served on the Pierce County Council, I was often tasked by local unions to act as a go between non-profit boards and labor. I have used my influence in several areas over the years trying to bring management into the light and support the needs of workers. I worked with my

colleagues to try to unionize legislative assistants in the 90's and the result of my experience has pushed me into being a stronger advocate for labor.

I support Project labor agreements when it comes to public investment in construction and my goal would be to have card check for any entity that holds large contracts with us (some of our local non-profits and our security contractor come to mind).

13. What policies and actions would you take to protect and improve the natural environment?

- 1) Preserving farmland by recruiting new people to take over from retiring farmers
- 2) Utilizing the Flood Control District to preserve prime agricultural land around the Puyallup River and providing for a means to bring young farmers in to provide ecologically friendly farms
- 3) Partner with the Puyallup Tribe instead of fighting with them when it comes to managing the land within and adjacent to their reservation
- 4) Finish the trail connection between Puyallup and Tacoma (see above)
- 5) Encourage salmon friendly efforts, eliminating culverts, and work with local fishermen to turn them into conservationists and support the cause
- 6) Seek to improve our telecommunications system to foster more work from home opportunities for residents of Pierce County
- 7) Expand our transit system

14. What would you do to increase housing access and decrease income inequality?

In the depths of the Great Recession, I worked on streamlining our housing construction and zoning laws to protect the environment and expand the availability of affordable housing. I brought in neighborhood activists, housing advocates, and the construction industry to map out a way to build out of the economic downturn and maintain a construction industry that was dying. Good paying union jobs in the trades need to be preserved and the county needs to be creative in this coming depression to push for public works projects that will prepare us to fight our way out of our current situation.

By investing in public works that expand the platform for new construction and new jobs, we can protect our environment, extend housing opportunities to those who do not have them, and make a stronger, more vibrant community.

Here are a few examples:

- 1) Housing Affordability and homelessness are not always the same issue. Housing access can be increased by increasing the supply of units for sale or for rent in our county.

Building in incentives that work (key point) and holding the building community to them is one way to address this. If you don't want to build affordable units (or can't), then require developers to pay into a housing trust fund that we can use to finance construction of working class or low-income housing options

- 2) Reviewing our building and zoning code requirements to see what we can do to streamline the process and again, use incentives to increase our affordable housing stock.
- 3) The City of Tacoma fought Pierce County's ability to up-zone existing communities to provide low-income housing. The change of policy (last year) can help address some of the shortages and pressures on the city of Tacoma. The cost of land is cheaper here and we can increase affordability.

15. Identify any budget challenges for your elected office/body; how would you deal with them?

In 2007, I worked across party lines to expand our rainy-day fund for the county. We increased our reserve by nearly 6 million dollars that year... just in time for the Great Recession. The county was able to buy time and allow people offers to retire early and save job of less senior employees. We made cuts when we had to and did our best to support those, we had to lay off by trying to find other vacancies in the county for them to fill. Contrast this with other counties and cities who either kept spending money they didn't have and imploded their budget (Tacoma) or were forced to do massive layoffs immediately due to a shortage of funds.

Ensuring the safety of our citizens and maintaining our social safety net are the two key areas that we need to protect. Investing what little resources we have on planning our way out of the coming (current) Depression and investing our excellent bonding capacity to literally create a WPA in the county may be our other task (there are corporate taxes that the county can levy do to a recent Supreme Court case which may provide revenue to bond against).

Any major decision would have to be thoroughly vetted in a public arena and our budget process needs to change to make it more transparent. Eliminating last minute amendments without the ability of the public to comment will go a long way towards the transparency we need.

16. How will you approach safety, police, and court system issues – and what are they?

Public Safety is the largest expenditure for County Government, and usually, outside of providing for sheriff's, the least mentioned by candidates running for office. I have several immediate changes that I would like to seek out to improve our criminal justice system:

- 1) Expand the court system to account for the additional two judicial department Pierce County is allocated by the legislature.

- 2) Expand the behavioral health diversion system to give judges the latitude to give chronic minor offenders the help they need rather than placing the mentally ill in our jails.
- 3) Reducing the high bail amounts in the county to be on par with other counties in the Puget Sound region.
- 4) Improve the access of the incarcerated to their public defenders
- 5) Here is a small one – the county pays for teeth extraction – but makes the incarcerated pay for toothpaste and toiletries. (really??)
- 6) Over time, I would like to partner with the state to improve the pay of Forensic Evaluators who determine if an incarcerated person is able to participate in their own defense. Currently, these evaluators generally do not have the skills necessary to perform the task and are often paid at 1/3<sup>rd</sup> the usual cost – a disincentive to having the most skilled people making these critical criminal justice decisions.

17. Finally, any additional comments you would like to share with the Committee:

After my loss to Mike Lonergan as Assessor Treasurer in 2012, I was unemployed for nearly a year. This had a profound effect on my values and my understanding of the challenges that people in our county face day to day. The fear of losing my partner to INS if I did not continue to pay the outrageous out of state tuition to maintain his visa pushed me to become more aware of the needs of our immigrant community. These experiences teach you who your friends are – and who is just along for the ride while it lasts. It was a growing experience that I barely survived, but a lesson learned.

I have watched the people that I worked hard for on the local level move farther and farther away from the values that I espouse. The LNG plant, the Methanol Plant, the “leasing” of the Click! Network, the value of power over policy has driven my desire to come back to Pierce County as a councilmember.

I look forward to a thorough discussion of these issues during the interview process.