

Comparing the Four Candidates for City of Decatur District 1 City Commissioner

This document is a compilation of the answers that the candidates gave to the questions posed by Decaturish.com and then published on separate dates (see below).

In this compilation, the candidates answers are presented in adjacent columns to facilitate comparisons.

<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Publication date</u>	<u>Link to Decaturish article</u>
Melissa Manrow	9/7/2017	Manrow
Tim Martin	9/8/2017	Martin
Kelly Walsh	9/8/2017	Walsh
Betty Blondeau	9/10/2017	Blondeau

Melissa Manrow

1) Why are you running for the Decatur City Commission seat?

Decatur is a richer community because of the diversity of housing, business, economic status, race and family type that we've embodied for many years. I am running to champion that diversity. We are stronger when a variety of faces and experiences have a place in the conversation and in planning for our future.

Tim Martin

1) Why are you running for the Decatur City Commission seat?

The short answer is that I love Decatur, and I care about its future. I'll elaborate:

I was raised to believe that when you see a need, you step up to help. The great advantage of this conviction is that it enables you to meet people where they are. You get to know them as neighbors and gain a better sense of just how diverse our individual priorities can be.

Decatur has some unique needs. We're at a crossroads. Decatur has successfully navigated a period of decline and disinvestment, and we're now tasked with a new set of challenges — the challenges of success. Safe and efficient mobility around town. Housing affordability. Downtown livability. Responsible use of tax dollars and sharing of resources. These are areas where there's no shortage of opinions and priorities among our community. I can help bridge different views.

Kelly Walsh

1) Why are you running for the Decatur City Commission seat?

I'm running because I believe in Decatur. I would like to be part of the leadership team that takes us into the next decade and beyond with integrated comprehensive planning, smart growth, and the protection of a healthy living environment for all residents. I'd like to serve as a commissioner in Decatur because it is a great city with a rich history, a vibrant present, and a compelling future.

Betty Blondeau

1) Why are you running for the Decatur City Commission seat?

As a lifelong citizen of Decatur, I love this city. I believe we're now at a crossroads, and I want to put my skills to work on the Commission in order to guide Decatur in the most positive direction and the one that reflects what its citizens want. I will listen to the citizens and will seek bold, clear solutions to the complex issues that we face.

Through community projects, involvement with my children's schools, and my years serving on and leading the Decatur Business Association, I've been successful in bringing folks with different positions and viewpoints together to make good things happen in our community. It would be an honor now to commit my time, energy, and resources to doing that on a larger scale — in the service of the wonderful citizens and neighborhoods of Decatur.

Melissa Manrow

2) What makes you a better candidate than your opponents?

My years of experience: as a Decatur resident for over 15 years, I have been closely involved in the growth and careful planning that have made the city of Decatur such a great place to live. I have served on the Decatur Planning Commission since 2010, on the Decatur Infill Task Force in 2005, and on the Decatur Heights Neighborhood Association

Tim Martin

2) What makes you a better candidate than your opponents?

It's my ability to earn trust rather than just request it and my experience managing a \$50M financial portfolio for nearly 20 years.

I've built a wealth management practice, and every day I help people attain their goals. I stick with my clients — not just through good times but through the hard ones — to make sure we get the job done. I earn their

Kelly Walsh

2) What makes you a better candidate than your opponents?

My track record of dedicated service and engagement in the community over the last twelve years has afforded me a perspective on issues that I feel is invaluable to the commissioner role. Through service to multiple constituencies across the city I have been able to learn what residents are thinking, worrying about, and what their ideas are for our future.

Betty Blondeau

2) What makes you a better candidate than your opponents?

I am an independent candidate and I have no potential conflicts of interest through any business. I have many years' involvement as a community activist and as a fundraising professional in the arts field. During my long professional career, I have worked effectively with volunteer boards, professional staff, consultants, and developers. I will bring those

executive committee from 2004-2008. I am also a graduate of Leadership DeKalb, class of 2002, and have worked in county government since 2001. In addition to my service as a not-for-profit board member, I am an attorney, with a law degree from the University of Georgia. My experience working with the city and county have provided years of preparation for this seat on the commission. I require no on-the-job training, and will get right to work keeping this city great, and making it even greater.

trust by speaking honestly and following through. That commitment to helping is what has always driven me since I was young. Growing up, there wasn't a night of the week that I didn't have a practice to go to or a church service project to work on. All manners of serving others and being a part of a team.

Decatur is my team now and I'll roll up my sleeves to help alongside anyone willing to do the same. Listening and building consensus — keys to successful leadership — are part of my DNA.

I am a parent with children in the schools for the last seven years (and with 10 more to go!), a small business owner, an active volunteer, and a community leader. I believe strongly that Decatur residents deserve a leader who is fully-engaged, someone they can trust, who listens — someone who answers the call and gets things done. I am known for having a collaborative and positive leadership style. I prioritize partnerships, work across diverse interest groups and can leverage a varied skill set founded in strategic planning, strong communication, and a deep desire to learn from others. As an elected representative of our city I will bring professionalism and a responsive approach to working with our city government, county partners, and state representatives.

skills to my role as commissioner in considering all key issues and finding solid answers through collaboration. I am experienced in hearing citizens' voices and in ensuring that those voices are valued in the decision-making process. Transparency, integrity and the absence of conflict of interest are of paramount importance to me, and I promise my work will always reflect that. As a retiree, I am prepared to devote as much time as needed to fully represent my constituents.

Melissa Manrow

3) What do you think is Decatur's greatest strength?

Our sense of community, which springs from our citizens' involvement. Decatur has been very intentional in its hard work and careful planning for the future. As a city, we must continue to nurture and welcome involvement and input from our citizens. Our best ideas don't necessarily come from the top, but from the collaboration of our residents who are committed to improving the quality of our city.

Tim Martin

3) *What do you think is Decatur's greatest strength?*

Without question, Decatur's greatest strength is its people.

It has been a year since I decided to run for city commission. During that time, I've met the most amazing people with many different perspectives, all committed to this city we share.

Through the 1980s and 90s, metro Atlanta had many communities facing similar challenges, yet Decatur overcame them and flourished in ways now referenced as model practices. It was made possible by steadfast leadership and Decatur's people through their commitment to the city and their commitment to each other.

There's a cohesion here — a unique community spirit — a special Decatur energy I share and am committed to building upon.

Kelly Walsh

3) *What do you think is Decatur's greatest strength?*

Decatur's greatest strength is by far its residents. Our citizenry is smart, driven, charitable, and neighborly. We have a civically-engaged populace like no other. The sense of place we create by acting and conducting ourselves in this way is very special and is the result of our city's strong character.

Betty Blondeau

3) *What do you think is Decatur's greatest strength?*

Decatur's highly regarded school system is a huge draw for young families. The grandparents of those young children also come to Decatur to be near family and to enjoy the walkability and special flavor of Decatur. The Decatur "character" is also a draw for diverse populations. Decatur is a special place.

Melissa Manrow

4) What do you think is Decatur's biggest challenge?

As Decatur continues to grow, with new residents attracted by both the quality of life and an excellent school system, we are experiencing great increases in housing prices. The city's leadership needs to foster access to housing choices for "all ages and stages," as well as holding on to our sense of community.

Tim Martin

4) What do you think is Decatur's biggest challenge?

As I've already mentioned, Decatur's biggest challenges are those caused not by decline but from Decatur's successes.

For many years, Decatur battled a dwindling population and crippling loss of investment. Law enforcement was overstressed, and there were serious concerns about how to pay for the things we value. So much so that the prospect of dismantling our school system and folding it into DeKalb County was suggested.

That might seem unfathomable to recent newcomers. That's because in years past, the Decatur community met those challenges head on and tackled them. Today, we enjoy a high quality of life, but we also face a new set of challenges that've come with it.

Kelly Walsh

4) What do you think is Decatur's biggest challenge?

Decatur's greatest challenge stems directly from our greatest strength. Over time and working together we have constructed a healthy city with a strong economy and excellent schools. We have cultivated a unique walkable city with a high quality of life that many people want to experience. The recent pace of growth and its negative impact on our diversity has been one of our biggest challenges as a city.

Betty Blondeau

4) What do you think is Decatur's biggest challenge?

As is often the case, our biggest strength can also be our biggest challenge. We must fund the school system that is such a draw for young families. As we grow and prosper and attract new residents, we must ensure that development is smart and sustainable. We must regulate development to preserve the unique Decatur quality of life and to ensure that we do not price people out of the market. I am in a position to address these issues with no possibility of personal benefit. Affordable housing is a high priority for me. Another component of this challenge is the need to preserve our tree canopy. We also need to deal with increasing concerns about traffic.

For example, our commitment to a local, thriving school system has reaped tremendous rewards. But it's also brought enrollment pressures and accelerated housing costs. For many, it's now too expensive to become or remain a part of Decatur. Our seniors have limited options for downsizing. Our grown children can't find starter homes. Our city and school employees can't afford to live in Decatur. My wife is a teacher in City Schools of Decatur. I get it because Melanie and I have lived it. This problem chips away at the wonderful diversity underpinning Decatur's strong fabric.

Melissa Manrow

5) How would you address what you feel is Decatur's biggest challenge?

I plan to examine best practices for housing affordability and accessibility, then engage the community in a discussion of the best fit for our town. I believe that

Tim Martin

5) How would you address what you feel is Decatur's biggest challenge?

We need strong schools. That's a given. But we also need concurrent leadership to manage the issues stemming from Decatur's desirability and rapid growth.

Kelly Walsh

5) How would you address what you feel is Decatur's biggest challenge?

We need to take a multi-pronged approach to fostering diversity. I recognize that Decatur must be cognizant at every turn regarding how to support and increase racial,

Betty Blondeau

5) How would you address what you feel is Decatur's biggest challenge?

I would work hard to assure that citizen input is heard and valued in development decisions. I would seek to incorporate our citizens' expertise and experience in

together we will keep making Decatur greater.

On the housing affordability front, I understand the economics of property development and the need for creative new thinking. As Commissioner, I'll help enable viable market solutions and support the excellent work of the Decatur Housing Authority. I'll also lend my support to the city's emerging Community Land Trust to increase workforce housing for teachers, emergency personnel, service workers, and so many others key to a diverse and well-rounded community.

On the mobility front, safety is key. I'll continue and build upon downtown and neighborhood efforts to ensure more people have more choices in how to get around — in ways in which each user is safely accommodated. The more kids (and others) walking or biking safely, the fewer being driven, and the fewer cars competing for space. I'll further target our areas of greatest challenge, particularly the Scott Boulevard corridor to ensure safe access and use for all.

economic and social diversity. The underpinning of that diversity is affordable housing. As a commissioner I will bring the voice and perspective that we need to create affordable housing opportunities that can accommodate more city and school employees, public servants, seniors, and the next generation of young people who want to return to the special place where they grew up. Additionally, I will strongly support our efforts as a community to execute on the 60-point Better Together Community Action Plan and use it to meet our stated collective goals for equity, inclusion, and engagement.

planning and development while these issues are studied by consultants, staff, and commissioners. As an example, in participating recently in the meetings of the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Board I have been impressed with what the volunteers on this board are accomplishing in working to bring creative solutions to so many issues.

Finally, on the resources front, I'll work closely with our schools and city departments to ensure all residents benefit from our collective investments. For example, the city's United Methodist Children's Home property holds tremendous potential — not just for surrounding residents but for the broader Decatur community, both those with kids in our schools and those without. I'll commit myself to a wide-ranging public visioning and implementation process to ensure we all find ways to benefit.

I recognize and respect the school board's autonomy. They make the decisions that impact education in Decatur, but that doesn't mean the city commission can't contribute to CSD's success. My commitment as a Commissioner is to an ongoing and increasingly healthy and supportive relationship between the two bodies, and to the bridge-building, particularly with regard to any annexation considerations.

Melissa Manrow

6) What are the top two or three things you plan to focus on during your term as a commissioner?

§ Fostering access to housing for “all ages and stages.” At every stage of life, where we live is the foundation for our health, education, safety and economic well-being. Our home town should have a variety of housing options that are affordable to all members of our diverse community.

§ Encouraging strong succession planning among Decatur’s senior staff. The City of Decatur has a City Manager form of government, and several of the senior management team (most with more than 25 years of experience) are considering their possible retirement within the next three years.

§ Supporting the Decatur Police Department in its strategic planning process, as it continues its careful self-examination of best practices, balancing the demands of community relations and engagement, transparency,

Tim Martin

6) What are the top two or three things you plan to focus on during your term as a commissioner?

As I mentioned above in Question #5 and reference on my campaign website at www.timfordecatur.com, my top priorities are: confronting housing affordability; enhancing downtown livability with creative approaches to greenspace and infrastructure; taming the Scott Boulevard corridor; and managing shared city resources in budget-conscious ways in which the most residents benefit.

Kelly Walsh

6) What are the top two or three things you plan to focus on during your term as a commissioner?

A top priority of mine would be to partner with our downtown residents and business owners to create a world-class downtown district that anchors our entire city. Through master planning combined with my strong leadership our city’s largest neighborhood will realize its full potential as a vibrant, green, active and robust commercial corridor. Additionally, I would be an integral influence in the master planning process for the United Methodist Children’s Home property. This 77-acre property offers a greenspace legacy for generations to come. I will ensure that we plan strategically to maximize its use for all residents with a view to both active and passive use, as well as creating opportunities to showcase the arts, culture and diversity of our community. Also critical to our city’s future is to plan

Betty Blondeau

6) What are the top two or three things you plan to focus on during your term as a commissioner?

Transparency. I will focus on honest, frequent, timely communication with my constituents to ensure that they are included in matters relating to development, their neighborhood, and traffic, among others. Citizens must be a part of the decision-making process. Too often, we citizens hear about decisions after the fact. My goal is to improve communication such that my constituents are aware of issues on the table so they are not surprised—and can be a part of the solution if they desire.

Affordable housing and preserving diversity. Diversity has been our strength. In order to preserve that diversity, I will work to ensure that we take every opportunity to find ways to make affordable housing available for our teachers, police officers, firefighters and seniors. We must find

engagement, transparency, and careful fiscal oversight.

for growth and development while keeping the impact to our schools at the top of mind. I will be a personal bridge to connect the Commission with our school community to align our efforts. This relationship will ensure better long-term outcomes for all of our residents. My commitment to Decatur and vision for our shared success is elaborated in more detail at www.votekellywalsh.com.

innovative ways to offer a variety of housing options to our diverse community.

Greenspace. I will focus on finding greenspace in downtown Decatur to serve those who live there (which comprises 28% of the city's population). Greenspace is a major part of Decatur's charm, but this has been a challenge for the north side. Further, I will work to ensure that the Children's Home property remains green, and that we preserve and protect the old growth trees that are such an important part of what makes that property special.

Melissa Manrow

7) If elected, do you promise to conduct yourself in an ethical and transparent manner?

Yes! In fact, I've taken the Pro-Truth Pledge, which I believe all current and aspiring elected officials should take.

<https://www.protruthpledge.org/>

Tim Martin

7) If elected, do you promise to conduct yourself in an ethical and transparent manner?

Yes, 100 percent. I work with other people's money in a highly regulated sector. I know of no other way to operate other than unshakable transparency and ethics. I've demonstrated those principals via the

Kelly Walsh

7) If elected, do you promise to conduct yourself in an ethical and transparent manner?

Absolutely and without a doubt I promise to meet the high standards of comportment and behavior that Decatur residents deserve and expect. As an elected official I would take extremely seriously the

Betty Blondeau

7) If elected, do you promise to conduct yourself in an ethical and transparent manner?

Absolutely. As stated earlier, I have no business interests that could ever be in conflict with my goal of serving the citizens of Decatur. I believe this is of paramount importance. peers in local, county, and state government. My goal is

success of my business. I hold myself to a higher standard with my clients and will continue to do so as an elected official.

responsibility I have to conduct myself in an ethical and transparent manner, not just meeting minimum standards in that regard, but setting an example for my peers in local, county, and state government. My goal is always to lead by example and

always to lead by example and to serve with humility.