



## Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors Candidates' Forum 2021

*What are your qualifications for the Board of Supervisors, and what issue or policy position would best define the difference(s) between you and your opponent?*

**Jessie Barksdale:** My career began with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in Anchorage, Alaska. I retired from the FAA Headquarters at Washington, DC, as a Senior Manager of 30 years. In 2011, I was elected to the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors. I served on the Board of Supervisors from 2012 – 2017. I served as Chairman of the Board in 2014 and 2016.

I serve on these institutions

- The Institute for Advanced Learning & Research – IALR Foundation Board of Directors
- Smart Beginnings Danville-Pittsylvania – Board of Directors (Chairman 2019 & 2020)
- Danville Regional Airport Commission (Chairman 2019 & 2020)
- Averett University – Board of Trustees
- Private Pilot (Multi-Engine Airplane) A Member of Civil Air Patrol (Mission Transport Pilot)

**Charles H. Miller, Jr.:** No Response Provided

**Ryland E. Brumfield:**

Qualification: Owner/operator of Beef Cattle Farm

- Manager at Abbott Labs for 26 years
- Served 3 years on Pittsylvania County Road Review Committee
- Served 8 years on Pittsylvania County Planning Commission
- Currently serving on the Pittsylvania County Board of Zoning Appeals

Policy Position: A conservative who believes in keeping expenses below revenue and not wasting taxpayers' money

**Gregory S. Robinson:** I feel my education, twenty years in automotive work and management, pastoral, and teaching experience, as well as being a lifelong resident of Pittsylvania County qualifies me for a position on the Board of Supervisors. I have not read or discussed any particular issues with my opponents; thus, I cannot comment on areas in which we may agree or disagree. One difference regarding many of the county's policies is my unique view from an outsider's perspective. As one who has not been heavily involved in the county bureaucratic machinery, I will question the necessity and validity of every policy decision and will not simply accept answers at face value.

**Darrell W. Dalton:** Knowledge of Local County Government and daily operations. Strong communication and listening skills.  
Prepared and managed County budgets. I have 31 + years of Government experience.

**Joe B. Davis:** I have been serving on the Board of Supervisors for six years with a voting record that proves my commitment to the citizens of the Dan River District and all of Pittsylvania County. This

experience sets me apart from my opponent because I am spun up on the issues that face the county and will not be in a learning curve when it comes to making important decisions.

**Timothy W. Chesher:** I have been a resident of Danville/Pittsylvania County all my life. Born in Danville, and when the opportunity presented itself, I moved out to the county. I have been with Ringgold Fire and Rescue for the last 20 years as an EMT/Firefighter, so I am familiar with the community and the people in the Dan River district. What sets me apart I think is my time working in the community as a first responder, getting to know the people I live with and around and what is important to them.

*If elected, what will be your top priorities?*

**Jessie Barksdale:** All of my issues are priorities, but for this question - I think that the County needs some planning. In my opinion, it seems that the County as focused on economic development (that is great, and we need it). BUT we have other priorities –

- does the county know what or where the needs are?
- are the communities included in the conversations?

When planning is on the agenda, I will ensure that planning inclusive.

**Charles H. Miller, Jr.:** No Response Provided

**Ryland E. Brumfield:**Top priorities will be:

- Job creation and economic development
- Providing high-speed Internet access to every home and business in the county
- Updating county zoning ordinance to ensure the orderly and controlled development of
- solar facilities

**Gregory S. Robinson:** If elected, a broad list of priorities would include Education, Public Safety, and Economic Development. Specific trajectories would include developmental projects within the Gretna/Callands district that could make use of an already-designated industrial park area. Additionally, a thorough investigation into the mechanical workings, finances, and general management of the county landfill is near the top. Improving communication and understanding between the Fire/Rescue Commission and the Board of Supervisors is also of paramount importance.

**Darrell W. Dalton:** Providing the best Internet service possible for our Citizens. Control wasteful spending and use taxpayers' money wisely would. Benefit all county services.

**Joe B. Davis:** Public Safety (law enforcement, fire & EMS), our schools and economic development.

**Timothy W. Chesher:** My top priority will have to be to listen and learn. Be a true voice for the Dan River district, and Pittsylvania County and hopefully make a positive impact for our county.

*Other than job creation, what do you believe is the single-most important issue facing our region, and if elected, what will you do to address the issue?*

**Jessie Barksdale:** My single most important issue facing our region is education. If elected, I would ask the Board of Supervisors, Danville City Council, School Boards, and community leaders for a round table regarding this crisis. The Virginia Board of Education Report says that we have teacher shortage, under-funding, and other severe gaps. Virginia ranks as one of the wealthiest states in the country. The report also says that Virginia is one of seventeen states with regressive school funding.

**Charles H. Miller, Jr.:** No Response Provided

**Ryland E. Brumfield:** The lack of reliable and accessible high-speed Internet is the single-most important issue facing the region and if elected I will work with county, state and federal leaders to obtain the funding needed to provide reliable high-speed Internet to each home and business in the county.

**Gregory S. Robinson:** It seems the biggest issue for citizens in the Gretna/Callands district is new or increased taxes. The largest hurdle for the county at this point appears to be funding for the state-mandated construction of a new courthouse and county jail. These two concerns are not mutually exclusive and must be reconciled. I will work hard to find innovative ways to help with funding without simply depending on adding new taxes or raising existing taxes.

**Darrell W. Dalton:** The impact of Covid-19 has affected our region in a bad way. If elected my top priority would be protect the health and welfare of our citizens, ensure they have the resources to stay healthy and support our local economy.

**Joe B. Davis:** Making sure that our school division leadership is preparing our students for the careers in the industries expanding and/or locating to our area. Job creation is crucial to our region and remains the single-most important issue so I will continue to work with our school division, economic leadership, as well as surrounding leaders and the state economic development leaders to ensure that the Southern Virginia Region remains in the forefront when recruiting businesses to our area and being able to provide the workforce.

**Timothy W. Chesher:** Losing our youth. Our children have no desire to stay and are moving away. We need to find a way to bring them back.

*In the present climate of fewer resources from the federal and state government, and an emphasis on scrutinizing spending, what priorities should be funded and what areas should be reduced or eliminated?*

**Jessie Barksdale:** The Federal government distributes grants to Virginia and local governments for their reasons up or down. In my opinion, the Federal AND state should fund more for Education, Law Enforcement, Fire and Rescue, and Communication. I would not reduce any funds from either government - Federal or State.

**Charles H. Miller, Jr.:** No Response Provided

**Ryland E. Brumfield:** Education must be funded in order that we have a solid work force to enhance economic development. We must work actively to stop federal and state mandates that continue to burden local budgets.

**Gregory S. Robinson:** Education and Public Safety should remain at the top of the priority list. Economic development is of great importance, but some of the continued spending used to maintain areas that have received little to no attention from developers should be carefully examined. Indeed, federal and state resources have decreased significantly over the past few years as legislators have scrutinized their own spending habits. In a similar manner, Pittsylvania County must look at where the tax revenue is being spent and trim the fat, as opposed to continually expanding the local government enterprise. Although cutting specific areas of spending out altogether is certainly an option to be explored, perhaps a better approach would involve trimming some monies from multiple areas netting a larger overall financial gain while trying to avoid the complete elimination of particular areas.

**Darrell W. Dalton:** In uncertain times that we are in today and not knowing what our state and federal funding would be makes this a difficult decision, but having the citizens of Pittsylvania County as heart it would be hard not to support funding our emergency services Volunteer Fire and Rescue. Reduce wasteful spending.

**Joe B. Davis:** My priorities will remain Fire and EMS, law enforcement, and our schools. I will continue working with the county departments to ensure that they are running efficiently within their budgets. If there are areas that can be reduced or eliminated, the most important factor is that our county departments will be able to continue the public services at the level expected from the citizens.

**Timothy W. Chesher:** Eliminating any debt would be a priority. Also, our educational facilities that have age on them need attention.

***How important is collaboration and cooperation with Pittsylvania County’s surrounding localities? If elected, how will you specifically support and/or increase such efforts?***

**Jessie Barksdale:** Collaboration and cooperation is very important working together to create something new in support of a shared vision (success). If I am elected, I will identify committed individuals on either side, and empower them. I will enable potential partners to communicate with each other. As we interact, I would hope that our collaborative partnership would turn to “strategic working together.”

**Charles H. Miller, Jr.:** No Response Provided

**Ryland E. Brumfield:** We can accomplish more working together than separate. It is important for localities to work closely with the state of Virginia economic development Go Virginia to ensure Pittsylvania County has a voice in the region and gets a fair share of the funds.

**Gregory S. Robinson:** Cooperation between Pittsylvania County and surrounding counties as well as the City of Danville is important, especially as it relates to economic development and public safety. Collaborative initiatives reduce the amount of project expenditures shouldered by one entity; thus, cost sharing benefits all parties involved. I will work to foster relationships effecting cooperation and collaboration with our neighbors, while putting Pittsylvania County interests first.

**Darrell W. Dalton:** I believe it is very important to have a good honest relationship with surrounding localities. I would support an increase providing a positive outcome for everyone.

**Joe B. Davis:** I realize the importance of collaboration and cooperation with our surrounding localities because when one or each of us benefit, all of us in the region benefit. There should be no discussion of boundary lines when it comes to economic development for our region – we are all in this together.

**Timothy W. Chesher:** I believe that working to have good neighbors, Danville and the surrounding counties, is extremely important. With our successes, we should be working together to make this area of Virginia a desirable place to want to work and live. I would like to learn each of their needs, plans, and have a good working dialogue with each other. As we prosper, hopefully all around us would do the same.

***Are there other partnerships that you feel are crucial for the success of the county? If yes, what are they and why?***

**Jessie Barksdale:** We should have partnerships for Tourism, and Recreation, but I don't they exist. Now is the time for Danville City Council, and the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisor to fund these partnerships.

**Charles H. Miller, Jr.:** No Response Provided

**Ryland E. Brumfield:** Yes, Old Dominion Ag Center. The Ag industry is #1 in Pittsylvania County therefore we should be actively promoting tourism and show casing the changes in the way Ag business is done.

**Gregory S. Robinson:** I am open to any conversations regarding partnerships that would serve to move the county forward. At this point, I do not have specific information on any partnerships.

**Darrell W. Dalton:** Yes, I think more partnerships between our farmers and local businesses would be a win-win providing products and food for our Citizens. Support Local!!

**Joe B. Davis:** Partnering with our schools, Danville Community College, Averett University, and our business community, to ensure our students are receiving the education and skills needed to obtain the jobs available in our area. It is important that our young people also shadow in the businesses to obtain first-hand knowledge of the workforce needed to sustain our businesses.

**Timothy W. Chesher:** Our region has a lot of potential for a vast array of partnerships. My job would be to see what is in place now, and hopefully gain insight to possibilities of what would be best for all. Also gaining insight through people throughout my district and our county for advice.

***In terms of economic development in Pittsylvania County, what will be the greatest opportunities and challenges over the next 2-3 years?***

**Jessie Barksdale:** I hope that the greatest opportunities will be in the Berry Hill Industrial Park (Danville and Pittsylvania County), and the Caesars Casino project for Danville, VA.

**Charles H. Miller, Jr.:** No Response Provided

**Ryland E. Brumfield:** Our greatest opportunities are possessing the Southern Virginia Mega site at Berry Hill and advance education in precision machinery and robotics training. Our challenge will be providing a quality work force to meet the needs of a changing world.

**Gregory S. Robinson:** The greatest challenge presently of economic development is overcoming the COVID pandemic and getting people to return to work. Assuming this particular issue is soon resolved, the county has infrastructure, e.g., industrial parks, in place for constructing modern manufacturing facilities as companies are drawn to our region. I will work toward bringing a proactive approach to economic development to expand our business footprint and our workforce. I will work to enhance technical training opportunities for local high school students and graduates to fill job openings and retain generations of families in our county with good-paying career employment.

**Darrell W. Dalton:** The future opportunities for economic development in Pittsylvania County should be great. We have a very knowledgeable hard working Director. I feel like our challenges will be minimized.

**Joe B. Davis:** Companies are expanding, and new industries are locating to our region. We have a great opportunity to educate and train our young people to be ready for these companies. We must especially be prepared for The Caesars Casino workforce. In addition, we must recruit new restaurants

and hotels to our county. The recent Blue Ridge Rock Fest taught us that our infrastructure needs improvement to be able to accommodate the influx of tourists to our area.

**Timothy W. Chesher:** I would love to see a strong work force available for businesses seeking a place to set up. We have the available sites, but the technical skills they are seeking are getting harder and harder find. I personally have found how hard it is to find qualified individuals in the skilled trades industry, and would change that for our county.