

**Cathleen Lewis
For
Mercer County Commissioner**



Dear Mercer County Democratic Committee,

I am writing today to express my interest in the Mercer Democratic Committee's endorsement for the open seat on the Mercer County Commission.

Before I officially threw my hat into the ring, I wanted to make sure that I had spoken to committee members in every town to hear what they were looking for, and while I may not have already spoken to every committee member, I hope to speak to many more of you over the next few weeks.

The message I received was clear and mirrored my own concerns – we need to find ways to work together and bring unity to the party and the county, and to focus on providing services to all our residents. As I listened to committee members thoughts and priorities, many things became apparent:

- We need someone who can build on past successes and amplify the impact of the county government and innovate to meet future needs
- We need someone who can hit the ground running, who has experience bringing together disparate factions and who will find policies that benefit ALL residents
- We need someone who will listen to those whose voices are not being heard and help amplify their concerns.

Those priorities make my own experiences uniquely situated to this race.

Ten years ago, when I was elected to council, we were a Democratic majority and had just captured the last Republican seat. I was a fresh new face, complete with an infant on my lap as I was sworn in. That gave me a fresh perspective to push for new ways to do things, which, at first, created challenges as some felt it was a rejection of all the work they had done. We quickly found ways to work together and realized we had the same goal – to help our residents, and I learned to find ways to build coalitions and reach compromises even within my own party. In my 10 years, I have pushed to grow Lawrence's community voice and establish better communication with the community via social media, more community events and a newly created position to better connect with the business community. With more community involvement also came greater transparency in everything we do, including added additional public comment periods, budget updates from all our departments at our public meetings and regular reports from our advisory committees in open session.

In my time as Mayor, I also looked to save residents' money by helping to ensure that we kept ambulance dispatch as a shared service located in the county dispatch center. I believe that we should always be focused on our resident's property tax savings, not just looking at our county or township's bottom line. **That is a value and an experience I will take with me to the commissioner board.**

While on council, I also pushed to create our compostable waste curb side pickup, a service that I am proud that we have continued but which is sorely in need of partners to bring down costs through economies of scale. Programs like these hold the potential to reduce our impact on climate change, reduce costs and provide needed services to our residents. But we need county leadership to make this a reality for residents in towns across Mercer.

Over the last two years, I think we have all seen that we are stronger if we can find ways to work together. COVID showed us that our municipal borders cannot and should not stop us from finding ways to work smarter and create

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coalitions to provide valuable and necessary services to ALL of our residents. As we look to the future, we cannot forget those lessons. And we must continue to strive to find more ways to work together. **I am committed to finding ways to build stronger coalitions and to work collaboratively.** Through my work on council and the Democratic committee I have built relationships with many leaders in towns across Mercer, those relationships will help me hit the ground running to effectively build needed coalitions.

In my day job, I am spearheading the state efforts to transition us to electrified transportation. The electric vehicle (EV) revolution holds the potential to significantly reduce emissions across the state, transform how we think about transportation, create new good-paying green jobs and save all of us money at the gas pump. My work in EVs is just my latest effort to ensure safe, reliable, multimodal transportation for all, an outgrowth of my work to fully fund New Jersey's Transportation Trust Fund and a natural pairing to my work as a Board member of the New Jersey Bike Walk Coalition.

I have also been a supporter of creating good paying **union** jobs here in Mercer County and around New Jersey, exemplified by my support for building safe, reliable roadways. In the last few months, I have also been fortunate to be the beneficiary of changes at the state that made my position one that is now represented by CWA Local 1037. As a candidate, I hope to be able to join a long, proud tradition of labor candidates serving in government.

In my personal life, I was born in Flushing, New York, raised in Massachusetts and came to New Jersey to attend Rutgers. After working for the New Hampshire Democratic Party, I returned to New Jersey and took a position in Congressman Holt's district office, where I met my husband, Paul Penna. We chose Mercer County as our home and place to raise our children. Nearly two decades later, I am proud of that decision and our home county.

I am the mother of two daughters (10 and 8), whom you have probably seen out and about at committee and club events. Raising two girls in today's world has only solidified my commitment to increasing equity and diversity in our world. I teach my girls to always seek out those whose voices aren't being heard and I've tried to live by example. I've worked in my girls' schools to help ensure that our immigrant neighbors know they have a safe space in our township, and I helped our town to create a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee. We shared some tough conversations about the difference between saying you're committed to diversity and really doing the work. I'm proud that our township had those conversations and proud that we chose action over lip service.

All of this, plus so many other contributions and valuable skills that I've brought to my community and our county, are the experiences that I would bring to the county commissioner board. **My track record of building bridges, encouraging coalitions, working to create compromise and increasing communication with our constituents is what this moment calls for.** As Democrats, we must keep pushing for progress and seek to amplify the voices of those who have not been heard. That is why I am seeking the office of County Commissioner.

I look forward to speaking with you and your fellow committee members over the next few weeks and I ask for the committee's support for my candidacy.

Sincerely,

Cathleen

Cathleen Lewis

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