

Candidate Info

Thank you, your submission/order has been received

The following details were submitted:

Basic Information

Please note your street address, email and phone number will NOT be published.

First Name	Douglas
Last Name	Chew
Address	1039 Sunview Avenue
P.O. Box/Apt #	
City	Jeannette
State	PA
Zip Code	15644
Country	United States of America
Email	doug@votechew4you.com
Phone	(724) 875-2037

Please upload a photo of yourself to run with your profile

File uploaded

Political Experience

What office are you running for?

Westmoreland County Commissioner

Are you an incumbent?

Yes, I was first elected in 2019 and my term began January 2020.

Have you ever held public office before? If so, what, where and when?

I was Hempfield Auditor, elected in 2009 and served from January 2010 through 2015.

Personal Information

Are you married? To who and for how long?

I am married to Cynthia Ann Chew (née Kravetz) since December 2010.

Do you have children? If so, who are they and how old are they?

Joseph H. Chew, 29 years old; Andrew J. Chew, 9 years old; Lucas M. Chew, 5 years old.

What job experience do you have?

I grew up working summers on a family dairy farm. I also worked for another Uncle in his greenhouse and another Uncle in his steel fabrication shop. I worked as a restaurant dishwasher for about a year at the Ground Round. In college I held various research jobs. After finishing my education, I was faculty at the University of Pittsburgh for nearly 30 years, first in Biological Sciences, then Surgery, then Medicine. During that 30 years, I was adjunct faculty at WCCC, CCAC, The Princeton Review, and other colleges throughout southwestern PA. Lastly, I remodel and rent out some properties. The totality of that experience is what I bring to the courthouse every day.

Are you a board member of any organization(s)?

Vice-Chairman, Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation
 Member, Local Emergency Planning Committee
 Treasurer, Board of Directors, River Art Works
 Member, Board of Directors, Westmoreland Conservation District
 Member, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
 Member, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission Executive Committee
 Member, Elder Abuse Task Force
 Member, County Commissioners Association of PA (CCAP)
 Member, CCAP, Comprehensive Behavioral Health Task Force
 Member, CCAP, Energy, Environment, and Land Use Policy Committee

Member, Board of Directors, Westmoreland County Land Trust
 Member, Board of Directors, Westmoreland Community Action (WCA)
 Member, WCA, PPP Committee
 Member, Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce, Government Affairs Committee
 Member, Westmoreland County Republican Committee, Executive Board, ex officio
 Adult leader, Cub Scout Pack 464, Fort Allen, Westmoreland-Fayette Council

What civic organizations or non-profits have you been an active member of in recent years?

Cub Scouts, Adult Leader, Pack 464, Westmoreland-Fayette Council
 Forbes Trail Trout Unlimited
 Five Star Trail Commission-RTC
 Sewickley Creek Watershed Association
 County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP)
 Jacob's Creek Watershed Association
 National Rifle Association
 Firearms Owners Against Crime (FOAC)
 Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
 Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce
 St. Barbara Church

Do you volunteer anywhere?

Cub Scouts, Adult Leader, Pack 464, Westmoreland-Fayette Council

Where did you go to school?

Hempfield Area School District, 1988
 University of Pittsburgh, BS in Biochemistry/Biophysics, 1992

Campaign Questions

Please note responses are limited to 300 words.

Why are you running for public office?

Previous Boards of Commissioners didn't treat the job as a full-time job in my opinion, but a Class 3 county as large as Westmoreland needs full-time leadership. My diverse background allows me to make contributions to infrastructure, healthcare, grants, and budgets. By farming, remodeling rental units, and administrating at Pitt I became familiar with large building issues and machinery. The second half of my Pitt career was at the School of Medicine, which works closely with UPMC, so I bring extensive knowledge of healthcare, billing, and more. At Pitt, we wrote grant applications to support our salaries (there was no free ride), and that experience has allowed Westmoreland County to bring in many more grant dollars in the last 4 years, including from some grants that I wrote myself. Lastly, in my final Pitt years, I contributed to budget management of millions on both the clinic and research sides of the institution.

Given the nature of county government in Pennsylvania, I feel a desire to bring my experience to Westmoreland County to work on the problems that plague our county. I feel I was blessed to have a wonderfully long career doing something that I loved, and I was able to do that despite growing up poor. I got to that career through the mentorship of many people like Hempfield teachers, Pitt professors, business folks, and my family. I am very thankful to those mentors for the service they provided to me above and beyond their technical job descriptions. Therefore, I feel a strong desire to use the remainder of my earthly time to help my neighbors in Westmoreland achieve the American dream and live a life of fulfillment.

What would you say the position entails?

County government in counties that follow the PA County Code is rather limited in scope. In many ways, Westmoreland County is akin to managing a \$400 million business, similar to the budget in medicine at Pitt. Many of the programs we operate are mandated by state or federal laws, but we have the flexibility to manage them as long as the goals are realized. Services for veterans, elderly, behavioral health, early intervention, developmental services, children and youth, and elections and voting are a small sample of required services that counties provide. Much of our \$400 million budget supports the very services in that list, so it is very important that the Board manages those services well. That's why the county commissioner position requires a broad spectrum of knowledge. The position requires community involvement in a variety of sectors; constant education to be current on the evidence base for the health services; understanding of legal language for contracting and holding organizations accountable for their services; and the, above all else, the willingness to listen and interact in respectful ways to bring the best every day to the citizens of the County.

What do you think are crucial skills to hold public office?

1. Willingness to lead and create change. Not every decision of an elected official will be favored by every constituent and staff member, but that doesn't make that decision any less important. Public office requires candidates that are willing to make decisions for the best of the majority.
2. Open ears and mind. A county commissioner must be willing to sit, listen, discuss, learn, and only then make a decision.
3. Integrity. In a \$350-400 million county budget, there are opportunities to favor friends with businesses, but an elected official must have integrity and contract with vendors capable of doing the job for the best price for the taxpayer.

What distinguishes you from other candidates?

I think most candidates running for political offices will have a more narrow set of experiences. Part of that is age-related for me, but more importantly, it is a combination of growing up in a family that was self-reliant and self-employed in trades businesses. On a dairy farm, I learned to be a "jack of all trades" and work long hours. When equipment malfunctions in the county buildings, I jump in with the team and help troubleshoot it. For example, most recently, we were quoted around \$13,000 to replace a simple ventilation fan. I climbed into the crawl space and reviewed everything with the team. Unfortunately, cheaper fans would have required other modifications that would have kept the total cost in a similar price range. If you are on the courtyard plaza, you will often see me still in the office at 5pm, 6pm, or even 7pm.

If elected, what are your goals?

My top 3 priorities are:

- Financial health of county government is a top priority, so staff are compensated appropriately and we have funds to fix infrastructure. This has to be done without burdening the senior citizens in our community.
- Population growth has to be a high priority. Businesses will only survive if they have customers and employees.
- Lastly, mental health funding is a high priority for me. I am part of the County Commissioners' Association of PA Comprehensive Behavioral Health Task Force, and I have been lobbying hard for increases in our mental health budgets because it is sorely needed. We need to continue to improve the Department of Human Services in Westmoreland County so that more of our folks can get the hand up they need and fewer tax dollars are used in the process.

How are you funding your campaign?

I am funding my campaign through personal funds and campaign fundraising. In 2023, through October 23, I have received \$69,928.48 in total revenue from fundraising, refunds, etc. I have no additional fundraisers planned for 2023.

In the same time period, I have paid out \$69,988.35. At this time, I have spent \$59.87 of my own funds, but there are still several expenses that have not been invoiced. I expect to put in several thousand of my own dollars.

My largest unique donor contributed \$5,000, which represents only 7.14% of my total expenses to date. I have received several hundred donations from donors who gave less than \$50.

What are the three most pressing issues in the office you are seeking and how will you work to solve them?

There is overlap to my response here with other questions. The inflation of the last several years has created issues for households and government both. While other levels of government, like the state government, have additional means of revenue, such as sales tax revenue which increases as goods cost more, counties are restricted to 2 main revenue mechanisms: property tax and fees for services. Some fees are capped by the State and some fees are for very specific functions, such as the Recorder of Deed's Act 152 \$15-fee that funds DEMOFund. In no case does a fee fund the complete cost of a service provided. Property tax accounts for about \$88 million of revenue of our 2023 expenses of \$420 million or about 21%. Unfortunately, property tax only functions in a world with 0% inflation, and that world is a fairy tale. The inflation then creates downstream effects, like organic increases in wages, which makes non-government jobs more attractive. That's why Westmoreland County has over 250 job vacancies.

A 19% increase in property taxes would be fatal to nearly all seniors on fixed budgets. Navigating these inflationary pressures will take significant experience such as what I gained from my time in Pitt's School of Medicine as we navigated the changes when Highmark and UPMC health plans separated. We need to lobby for elimination of property taxes, to write more grants to receive new funding, and to look for new ways to generate revenue for Pennsylvania counties.

In the last 4 years my colleague Commissioner Kertes and I have tried to bring in new business and new business facilities to the county. Those generate new revenue without burdens to our seniors. Since 2020, we have generated

historical investment in Westmoreland County: 13 new businesses in our industrial parks, building over 800,000 square feet of new buildings. We need to continue that work in the next 4 years. By removing blight, we have freed up open land for new housing of all types, to attract new residents to Westmoreland for the jobs we are creating. This work also helps address our shrinking population.

Lastly, there are not enough professionals for mental health and healthcare in general. That's why I am on a statewide board working to address these issues: CCAP's Comprehensive Behavioral Health Task Force. I also have been active with local groups in lobbying and educating elected officials on mental health needs in Westmoreland County. I plan to continue hosting my legislative breakfasts for these issues every spring.

How do you plan to involve your constituents in the decision making process?

I plan to continue my Town Halls, both in-person and virtually. In my second term, I plan to add a new type of Town Hall: office hours. I will host office hours weekly to answer questions from citizens, and I will do it at various times of the day. On the weeks that there are public meetings, I will host office hours to hear opinions from constituents for the agenda for each meeting.

I plan to continue social media outreach and developing my email newsletters. I plan to continue developing my commissionerdoug.com website, where my "Useful Links" and "County Database" pages help constituents find answers to their most pressing questions very quickly. I spend about \$2,400 each year of my personal funds to maintain a Zoom and Constant Contact license to communicate most effectively with my constituents.

Lastly, I plan to continue a robust schedule of visits to community functions and meetings, where I'm invited to provide regular updates on Westmoreland County.

What is the biggest need in the office you are running for and what will you do to fill that need?

I have touched upon this topic in several questions. Revenue generation is the biggest need and I will work closely with the Westmoreland County Industrial Development team to continue to bring new manufacturing and business facilities to the County. The growth of these businesses increases direct and indirect funds through corporate and individual contributions to the tax base and ultimately encourages new residents moving to Westmoreland.

Assess the recent performance of the board you are running for and, if elected, would you keep it on the same direction or change course?

The Board successfully navigated through the pandemic and ensured that the county did not suffer any long-term effects. The ARPA funds that were allocated were targeted in such a way that they would impact the largest amount of people across the spectrum of public services and safety nets and impact these areas for the longest amount of time into the future. One of the largest investments was with the Westmoreland Food Bank. The timeliness of that investment prepared the Food Bank for the surge that occurred in the last 18 months. The most vulnerable of our citizens now have this stable resource to rely on, and 2023 has seen record numbers of calls for food boxes. A large allocation of CARES funds went to restaurants, which was important because tourism is one of our top 3 industries. Tourists need places to dine and relax on their travels. Blight remediation is providing an open canvass for new properties, for affordable housing, for businesses, or for any other investments a resident wants to make. In the first term, we have set a very large, solid foundation to continue building upward as we resurrect Westmoreland.

What experience do you have with large budgets?

In my experience at the University of Pittsburgh in the School of Medicine in my last 8 years, I worked with a small team that oversaw clinical and research budgets in the Department of Medicine. The clinical budget is around \$143 million and the research budget around \$161 million. My time there included the Highmark and UPMC separation agreement which created a highly dynamic budget situation for several years. Other examples are in other responses above.

Analytical Questions

Please note responses are limited to 300 words.

How would you describe your management style?

I am a collaborative, servant-leader.

Describe an ethical dilemma you've faced. How did you resolve it?

At this time, I'm unaware of any ethical dilemma in county government in my first term.

How do your personal values and beliefs align with your policy positions?

If a county is working under the PA County Code, like Westmoreland County, there is not much activity in the way of policy decisions. Those policy decisions were made by elected officials in the state and federal governments. For example, in Westmoreland County, we don't get to decide if we provide early intervention to toddlers; that is mandated by the state. The State tells us what early intervention is, what toddlers qualify, and what a family must pay based on their income. As a county commissioner, I work to ensure that the vendors are qualified and accountable. I make sure they use evidence-based procedures. I work to make sure we use taxpayer resources in the most efficient ways possible. Most policies are decided outside of the counties.

In the end though, when a policy decision must be made, my job is to represent my constituents' and the majority's values and beliefs. That's one driving force behind my Town Halls and community involvement, so I'm always aware of voters' thoughts. My values and beliefs align very well with the voters that select me on their ballots.

Why should voters cast their ballot for you?

I respectfully request a vote from each and every reader of this message. My contribution as a careful and deliberative leader is important for maintaining cost-effective government that is accountable to the voters. I seek a deeper understanding than previous boards and I make sure to ask questions that reflect that desire. That aligns with my broad breadth of experiences from my 53 years. My conservative values are my North Star, but I am also compassionate about people as individuals. The fact that I am a driving force on mental and other health issues, locally and on a state-wide committee, shows that I can serve the most vulnerable of our citizens without hesitation.

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