



Citizens for Purcellville

www.citizensforpurcellville.org

admin@citizensforpurcellville.org

Dear Candidate,

The Citizens for Purcellville coalition was formed by a group of town residents and business owners who are dedicated to seeing our town be the best it can be. As such, we are deeply interested in hearing (and sharing with the community) information about each of the candidates in the upcoming 2026 election for Mayor and Town Council. We are also interested in learning about the issues that you believe that our town faces and strategies that you will take to address them.

To that end, we are sending this survey to each of the registered candidates in the upcoming election. These questions were submitted by town residents and representatives of businesses within the town. While we cannot prevent it, we ask that you do not collaborate with other candidates while responding to this survey.

Responses will be listed on our public website, www.citizensforpurcellville.org. While we are a registered Political Action Committee, we welcome your input in the process of educating local voters on important topics impacting our community.

Please return surveys at your earliest convenience. Typed responses are appreciated, either within the attached document, as a numbered email response, or in a separate document that you generate yourself.

Responses will be added to the Citizens for website as they are received and without editing. Candidates will be listed in the order which they will be listed on the ballot (based on candidacy filing date). Should you not choose to participate by 5pm on Sunday July 26th, we will make note of your non-response after that date and provide voters with publicly accessible biographical information.

Based on the answers provided, we may reach out with additional follow-up questions specific to your answers.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions via email at admin@citizensforpurcellville.org. Surveys may be submitted electronically to the same email address.

Thank you for your support of citizen engagement in the election process!

Citizens for Purcellville Candidate Survey

Candidate Name (As listed on Ballot): Paul McCray

Candidate Age: 70

Occupation / Employer (Employer Optional): Historian/NOVA Parks

Education: Parks & Recreation Management/NVCC, Park Management/GMU

How long have you been a resident of the Town of Purcellville?

23 years

Please provide a short biography of your experience and qualifications for the office that you seek.

I've worked in local government for 51 years. All but one year of that has been with NOVA Parks as a Park Ranger, Park Manager (20 years managing the W&OD Trail), as Operations Director and now as a Historian.

The NOVA Parks operations department had a budget similar to the town of Purcellville but with 110 full time staff and 700 part time and seasonal employees. Administering that department was very similar to managing a small town.

After retirement and working one year in charge of the Parks and Recreation department in Purcellville, I went back to NOVA Parks as a part time employee where I now serve as a Historian.

Many of the challenges facing Purcellville are familiar to me. I've dealt with budget shortfalls, aging infrastructure and staff realignments.

Please describe some of the ways or organizations in which you have been involved within our community outside of elected public service (Please include relevant dates):

From 2003 to 2007 I was an adult Cub Scout and Boy Scout leader in Purcellville. This followed six years as an adult leader in Sterling Scouting organizations.

In 2008 I served on the Purcellville Centennial committee interviewing older residents of the town to provide history for the celebration. I borrowed and copied almost 400 photos of Purcellville's past, providing a resource for the town celebration.

From 2005 to 2010 I served as a volunteer on the Purcellville Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, with two years as chair. During that time I helped plan and run various events, including Rock the Field and Purcellville Heritage Day with the Purcellville Preservation Association. Beginning in October 2025 I rejoined the Purcellville Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and I volunteer at town parades and events.

Citizens for Purcellville Question: Describe your personal vision for the town over the next 5-10 years?

I would like to see more citizens engaged in setting the direction for the town. The past year has seen a rise in activism by many residents and I'd like to channel that to create a more vibrant community.

Revitalization of our historic downtown is a key to attracting people to our small businesses throughout the town and help our residents spend their time and dollars in Purcellville. We have many empty storefronts downtown which and stores which are rarely open, giving little reason for visitors to shop along 21st Street.

I also want to see our small shopping centers thrive. This is happening at the Shoppes at Maple and Main where a group of eateries have located in a location built in the 1960s, now making it a destination for friends and families.

Citizens for Purcellville Question: Looking back at the previous 5-10 years of town history and governance by the town council, if you could change one significant action or decision by town council, what would it be?

I believe the 2017 decision by the town council to terminate the longtime town manager of Purcellville has led to nine years of instability. When that happened, the Assistant Town Manager was passed over and an inexperienced staff member was made Interim Town Manager. Poor decisions by that manager and the mayor led to multiple senior employees terminated or on paid leave, resulting in million of dollars in expenses and settlements.

Since then, the town has been led by experienced and competent managers but who left after a short time or were let go because they provided reality to the mayor and council majorities.

This happened again in 2025 when the current mayor and council majority fired an effective town manager and hired a replacement as acting manager who had no experience in the job. The result has placed our town in turmoil and led to one scandal after another.

Citizens for Purcellville Question: What do you consider the most important issue for the new Town Council to address at their first meeting in January?

Leadership is the most important issue for our town. Purcellville must have an experienced and professional town manager to lead the staff in operating the town and implementing the direction provided by the mayor and council members.

I will move to roll back the changes made to the town manager job description which allowed the current mayor to hire an unqualified friend.

Resident Question: In 2025, the Town Council took initial actions to defund and disband the town's police department. What is your position regarding the town's police department and will you affirm to voters in your answer to this question that you will not support or empower any future attempts to eliminate the Purcellville Police Department?

Purcellville has had a police presence since 1908 and is one of the reasons the town was incorporated - a requirement to have a police department in Virginia.

I believe our police department is vital to Purcellville and is an important asset to keeping our small town. I will resist any attempt to eliminate it from the budget or reduce the department's capabilities.

Resident Question: The cost of improvements to aging infrastructure, particularly the town's water system has been a big topic during the current term. Actions by previous town councils in the form of maintenance deferrals, utility rates not rising in conjunction with rising costs, and not following recommendations by staff or independent consultants, has resulted in the prospect of significant financial burden to both the town and to residents. What are your plans to address the issue of infrastructure and utility rates?

Replacing and upgrading our water system can only be accomplished if the town has the revenue to do so.

Until the water fees increased on July 1, residents in Purcellville only paid \$12.01 per 1,000 gallons of water while it cost the town \$21.57 to process and deliver that water. This happened because previous councils either raised the fees very little, not at all or deeply cut the fees. They failed to keep up with the cost of living and the need to replace the old pipes, backup generators and other equipment vital to our water system.

To balance the water budget, council majorities then transferred over other revenue including the meals tax, which had been used to pay for staff at the town hall and maintenance department. Important positions have been lost including IT staff who secured our computer servers and resident information.

Another position lost was in our planning department, a staff member who worked to help bring small businesses into our empty storefronts. We must stop this shell game being played with our important water department.

Once the water revenue has stabilized and is equal to the cost, yearly increases will only need to keep pace with the cost of living.

Business Question: The matter of water and sewer rates seems to be a regular topic for the Town. As I understand, current budget policy is to divert funds from the general fund as well as part of the meals tax revenue to subsidize water rates. Do you feel that this is fair and in the best interest of businesses/restaurants in town who already pay proportionally more for water per month than the majority of households?

Using dollars from the general fund and meals tax revenue to subsidize the water and sewer funds is not a sustainable way to pay for the costs of those services. It's also contrary to how Virginia requires utilities to operate...revenues should equal expenses.

Purcellville's meals tax flows into the general fund where it helps pay for the operation of the town. In 2025 to help pay for the reduction of water and sewer fees, the council majority moved meals tax revenue out of the general fund and cut the planning position whose job it was to work with small businesses in the town. This person helped existing and new business owners work with the town for planning and permitting purposes.

Meals taxes should stay in the general fund and be used to improve Purcellville.

Resident Question: One of the first split decisions of the current town council regarded the annexation of the property upon which the Valley Commerce Center is now approved to occupy. Can you speak to your opinion about future annexation, if such action may ever be warranted, or what might have been done differently with regards to the VCC project?

Any annexation opportunities should be evaluated as to whether there is a benefit for the town and what negative impacts are projected. The gain of taxes, utility fees or proffers should be considered but factors such as an increase in traffic, strain on the water system, extra maintenance costs and additional policing requirements to the town must not take away from the enjoyment and convenience of living in Purcellville for our residents.

The Valley Commerce Center should have been viewed in this context when it came up for the annexation vote. It would have generated taxes, fees and proffers for the town but more importantly, Purcellville would have had more control over the size of the development, the type of businesses locating there and the road system.

Those positives needed to be weighed against additional traffic brought to town roads.

Business Question: The Town of Purcellville requires businesses to pay a business license tax. This tax amount is directly tied to the annual gross income that a business conducts, as such, larger businesses pay larger taxes to the town. What value or services does the town provide for these fees and what do you believe that the town should be doing to support local businesses or economic development?

Purcellville provides a host of services which benefit businesses including those offered by our police department, the maintenance staff, the town planning and permitting team and even by parks staff, who bring people to town for events and parades.

Purcellville maintains most of the roads within the town and keeping those open and safe - and free of snow in the winter - helps employees and customers travel to businesses. Some businesses on Main and 21st Street rely on town parking lots for their customers.

Purcellville could support local businesses and economic development through the town website, listing and highlighting stores and services. As the budget allows, advertising on social media or in print newspapers and magazines outside of town could be effective in selling Purcellville as a destination.

Business Question: In 2025, the Town Council removed support for the Purcellville Main Street Program. Do you believe that this action was appropriate / in the best interest of the town and why? What is your personal position on Economic Development within the Town of Purcellville?

The Purcellville Main Street Program has proven to generate interest in our business districts and has brought people to events who are residents but also many who live outside of town.

This has happened through a volunteer effort since the Town Council ended Purcellville's involvement with the program. There was no credible reason for this as no tax dollars were directly involved and Purcellville's contribution was a few hours of staff time to help with grant writing. I will support Purcellville rejoining the Main Street Program.

I believe the effect of the town council majority's effort to pull back from supporting our store owners and to discourage new businesses has resulted in empty storefronts and dwindling retail sections. This is especially evident in our historic downtown where three buildings are empty and two businesses are by appointment only. There is little reason for visitors to spend time there other than going to Magnolias, Bia or Catoctin Creek and a few thriving retail stores.

We need to be proactive in pitching Purcellville to businesses and find ways to advertise to prospective store owners. We should reach out to form relationships with the brokers who help businesses find store fronts and we should look to streamline the process for locating in the town.

Resident Question: What steps will you take to improve working relationships between town council members and/or town council and town staff?

I will make sure all council members are aware of my views and will talk with all members. I believe in true transparency.

I've been local government staff for most of my life. I know the value in having experienced and expert staff to provide background information for the council. While I will make decisions based upon what is best for Purcellville, I won't come to a decision without hearing the thoughts of our staff. I believe it's wrong for the council to debate and come to a decision on an issue without a background paper from the staff.

I've gone on record several times during Council Comment periods stressing the need for ALL the council members to respect and trust the town staff.

Resident Question: Do you feel that tourism is important to our town? If so, what steps will you take to grow or encourage tourism within the town limits?

Of course tourism is important to Purcellville! My education and work background is in parks where it's known that every town has something about it which is attractive to visitors from outside the town limits.

I will support the efforts of the Purcellville Parks and Recreation Department to host events which are known to bring people from outside town and even outside the county. (I'm a member of the Purcellville Parks and Recreation Advisory Board)

We have a rich history as the largest town in western Loudoun. Purcellville had trains coming to town for 94 years and has one of the few train stations left on the line. In town is a hardware store which has been in business with the same family for 112 years. Many of the buildings in the historic district are 100 years old or more. These are all the building blocks for promoting a town people will want to visit.

We need to let people know who we are and when they get here, ways to tell them our story.

Resident Question: "Slow growth" is a phrase often used in campaign literature. Define the term, provide examples of "slow growth" or where we have NOT seen "slow growth", and explain what initiatives you will establish to achieve it.

My definition of slow growth is a pace of development which doesn't outrace the ability of the roads, utilities, schools and town services to keep up.

Here is an example of when we have NOT seen slow growth:

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, over 1,000 new homes were approved for Purcellville. Everything I listed above was strained to beyond capacity. This was especially true of the water and sewer systems in town and even after new facilities were added, within a year they were still overwhelmed. This led to state becoming involved and a requirement to add to the size of wastewater plant in order to handle the new homes.

I can't think of any examples of slow growth. What we've been seeing for years now is NO growth. Mayors and council majorities who won't talk with owners of land in our historic district.

There is a section of our historic district that is a dirt lot but has an owner who wants to build something good for Purcellville.

Slow growth to me is TALKING to the owner of the land. Hearing what they need and the council establishing what the town needs. The town needs to know there will be enough parking, that there will be good access into and out of the area. That the architecture will fit with the 100+ year old buildings existing. Public spaces. Negotiate!

This isn't development, this is revitalization. The 21st Street corridor used to be a vibrant business district with a Five & Dime store, a clothing store, several eateries, auto parts, a Safeway grocery store and more. The area behind 21st had various workshops and industrial uses. It can become a destination for residents and visitors with more restaurants and boutique shops.

Resident Question: “Transparency” is another phrase used in this election’s campaign literature. Define the term, provide examples of “transparency” or examples of actions where we have NOT seen “transparency”, and explain what initiatives you will establish to achieve it.

The best way to achieve transparency is to follow town policy and code. No decisions made by council members discussing issues outside of meetings. No majority slate who votes in lockstep at the direction of an unelected person.

The current mayor does not do that and I believe we need a change.

I will be an independent voice on council and will vote based on what I think is best for the town and the residents.

Resident Question: Data centers and high voltage transmission lines are a hot topic in Loudoun County right now. Please provide any commentary you may have on the issue.

I don't believe data centers should be built adjacent to communities in Loudoun. Reasonable distances to reduce noise and visual impacts should be established.

Transmission lines should be placed underground whenever possible from an engineering standpoint. This was proven to be possible when a high voltage transmission line was buried from the west side of Leesburg to Clarks Gap, avoiding the removal of trees from the W&OD Trail.

Data centers within the Purcellville town limits are impossible. Town zoning would not allow a data center and there is no land available which would be large enough for one. Most of the land around the borders of the town is taken by other uses. Also, the need for data centers to constantly cool the computer servers requires huge amounts of water, which is not available west of Leesburg.

Please feel free to add any additional comments or discussion you would like to include: