

NAME: Nicole Love Hendrickson
PARTY: Democratic
SEEKING: Gwinnett Commission Chair

1. Why are you seeking your office?

I'm running for Commission Chair because I believe in a future for Gwinnett County where its services remain world-class and everyone has a seat at the table. As this nation continues to grow more divided, I see unity here, and am committed to making sure there are quality jobs, clean water, beautiful parks, and great schools. As a Social Worker, I know how to help communities in crisis, and my decades of experience in county government will help lead us out of these tough times and into a hopeful future.

2. What do you expect to accomplish if elected?

COVID has taught us how connected we are and how innovative we can be. The Chair's biggest responsibility is presenting the budget, and I intend to preserve our great services, while preparing us for future emergencies. But while we have to make it out of 2020, we also need to be thinking about what Gwinnett will look like in 2050, and how to make it a more just and inclusive place. I intend to create committees to study sustainability, workforce housing, small business development, and how to integrate social workers into police responses that deescalate situations.

3. What distinguishes your candidacy?

I'm the only candidate with experience working with Gwinnett government. As the Outreach Director, I linked underrepresented communities with government so their voices could be heard. My role was as a bridge builder working with every community group – I was awarded a Public Service Award – including nonprofits helping the homeless. This is not the time for someone to learn on the job – we have to protect our tax base, keep services top-notch, and help our kids in school during this time. My opponent said he doesn't even want the job of Chair - that's not what we need now.

4. Pick any one issue. Expand on how you will address it.

Gwinnett has to think about what our development looks like with a long-term vision. We've seen a wide variety of results from poorly thought out developments to success stories like Duluth that incorporated live-work-play dynamics. Along the 85 corridor and at other transit nodes there are many places we can build with density that will attract companies and workers from all over, while reducing traffic even as we grow. Everything is connected, and as long as our schools are strong and we are strategic, we will continue to be a destination for the region.

5. Suggest ways to jump-start the economy after COVID-19.

I view the county holistically. Gwinnett has done so much right in the past which sparked its growth, especially creating amazing schools and homes that normal people can afford. Engaging in the race-to-the-bottom mentality with other counties won't get us anywhere. Instead, we can ensure quality jobs through smart growth – creating developments where young-professionals live near where they work and play – and learn from COVID by encouraging tele-working to reduce traffic. Gwinnett is going to grow and is already bouncing back strong from COVID. We have to be smart for the long-haul which will also insulate us from future shocks.

6. Please give a 100 word summary on your background

I grew up In Rhode Island in a single-parent home. We moved a lot and didn't have much. We moved a lot. My guidance counselor told me I should go to beauty school, and I determined to prove her wrong, becoming the first in my family to attend college, and became a crisis counselor at an elementary school. Later I would attend UGA where I got my Masters in Social Work. From there I worked in Gwinnett County with under-represented groups. Charlotte Nash hired me to join the County in 2015, and I became the first Community Outreach Director.