



Morgantown City Council Pledge

Morgantown residents built this pledge and platform as one step toward winning a people's government in our hometown. As part of the WV Can't Wait movement, more than 300 of us have participated in this process -- through outdoor town halls, community meetings over Zoom, neighbor-to-neighbor conversations, and through an online community survey. Our team also reached out to every current member of city council and leaders from more than a dozen local organizations for additional feedback.

We are asking every City Council candidate who wants our support to sign this Pledge and Platform. In return, we will fight hard to get them elected and help them advance these goals once in office.

Governing is hard. Change doesn't happen overnight. No matter who wins the next City Council race, we will not win this platform all at once. We seek a City Council that will fight for this vision alongside Morgantown residents of every race, gender, religion and class. It will take all of us.

As a candidate for Morgantown City Council, I pledge:

- **Transparency.** I will publish my cell phone number and respond to every constituent request within 48 hours.
- **Independence.** I will reject donations from developers, out-of-state corporate executives, and executives from Big Pharma and Big Energy.
- **Fairness.** I will choose the side of people who have been left out of the political process, not those who are profiting off of it, in policy-making and when making recommendations for boards and commissions.
- **Solidarity.** I will never cross a picket line.
- **Responsibility.** I will do the work to implement a New Deal for Morgantown:
 - Make Morgantown the Best Place for Workers & Small Businesses
 - Affordable Housing for All and End the Criminalization of Homelessness
 - Police Corporate Crime and Political Corruption -- Not Poverty
 - Choose Treatment Over Incarceration
 - Make Morgantown a Beautiful, Healthy, Welcoming Place

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A New Deal for Morgantown

Make Morgantown the Best Place for Workers & Small Businesses. Morgantown's economy is out of whack. For generations, corporate landlords and lobbyists have rigged the tax code and regulations to favor millionaires and multinational corporations over small businesses and working families. That's why so many of our families leave and so many of our small businesses fail. It's time to level the playing field.

- **Shift the financial burden away from small businesses and workers.** Create B&O exemptions and tax credits for small businesses, explore the elimination of the regressive user fee, and raise revenue "big box" fees for out-of-state retailers that are undercutting local businesses through increased accountability (including fines) for large companies that engage in corporate crime (pollution, wage theft, and so on).
- Pass a municipal **Workers Bill of Rights** that guarantees earned sick days, parental leave, and increases on-the-job protections for city employees and subcontracted workers. We will also protect Morgantown's \$15 minimum wage for city employees and seek to expand it to subcontracted workers, partners, and other local businesses.
- Pass a local **Homestead Ordinance** that incentivizes landlords to develop property, instead of leaving it empty or dilapidated. This would include instituting a fee on vacant commercial properties and aggressive enforcement of city code.
- **Protect local workers during the COVID-19 pandemic** by strengthening the requirement of face coverings over nose and mouth inside public buildings, indoor workplaces, public transit, and ride-sharing, to be removed only during eating and drinking while at work or in restaurants or bars. Continue to favor stronger CDC guidelines in policy-making (over weaker state guidelines). Supporting workers during a pandemic also means financial support, and we will aggressively pursue state and federal economic relief for Morgantown workers and small businesses.
- Borrowing from the model in Berea, Kentucky, **support jobs for local artists and artisans** and boost demand for their work by creating a category of economically incentivized businesses that create and/or sell authentic West Virginia primitives/folk arts or advance public health and fitness.

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Affordable Housing for All, and End the Criminalization of Homelessness. There is a houselessness crisis in Morgantown that's been made worse by the pandemic. We must stop criminalizing people experiencing homelessness, and we must start choosing tenants over commercial developers.

- Pass an **Evictions Moratorium** ordinance and a **Right to Housing** ordinance, to begin shifting city resources away from eviction and toward safe and affordable housing.
- Work to educate Morgantown tenant's about their rights, levy fines against landlords in violation of code, and institute housing "set-aside" ordinances to ensure that large developments include affordable housing units.
- Make planning and zoning ordinances more favorable to the creation of affordable housing (which could include reconsideration of minimum house width requirements, inclusionary zoning, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), and residential land banks).
- Shift law enforcement resources toward on-going **Housing First** practices that save money and lives by preventing crime and poverty.
- **Formally end the criminalization of houselessness**, by ending so-called "quality of life" ordinances and ban the clearing of encampments. We will also work to proactively protect the safety and belongings of people experiencing houselessness.
- Provide subsidized public transit to people experiencing houselessness or recently transitioned via Housing First.
- Fill the Street Outreach and Director of Development Services positions to help coordinate services for citizens and raise funds to strengthen the efforts of the new Land Reuse and Preservation Agency, respectively.

Tackle Corporate Crime and Corruption -- Not Poverty. In Morgantown, police are too often burdened with problems they don't have the resources or training to solve: mental illness, substance use disorder, and poverty. For a generation, Morgantown has spent millions of dollars locking up people in crisis, with no success reducing crime or substance use disorder. It is past time for a change. We owe it to our community to spend more on prosecuting the corporate criminals and corrupt public officials who do the most harm, and less on the Black, sick, and working class residents who experience that harm. That is how we will end the cycle of violence and trauma.

- Shift an initial one-third of police and court budgets toward **housing, community-based crime prevention, mental health services & courts, re-entry,**

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restorative justice, and victim advocacy -- models that are proven to prevent crime and address trauma. This would build upon the Council's current plan to embed a social worker in the police force. Support efforts to "**ban the box**" to prevent discrimination in local hiring.

- Shift an additional one-tenth of police and court budgets **to establish West Virginia's first Corporate Crime and Corruption Unit - to police corporate crime and political corruption**, the real root causes for West Virginia's problems. Seek to strengthen and aggressively enforce **local ordinances prohibiting wage theft, bribery, pollution, poor housing standards, municipal tax dodging**, and other forms of corporate crime, building on the efforts of past administrations to identify large businesses that dodged municipal taxes and licenses.
- Pass local ordinances 1) **that prohibit law enforcement from arresting someone for cannabis possession, use, or growing** and 2) **that permit the zoning of cannabis-based businesses** within the community. These would build on the Council's recent step toward decriminalization.
- Jail overcrowding is a decades-old problem in our areas. We will prohibit the use of jail time as a consequence for unpaid tickets, traffic costs, and misdemeanor charges.
- Continue to pursue plans for implementing a strong **Civilian Review Board**, in collaboration with local racial justice organizations; ban chokeholds; end civil asset forfeiture; and begin shifting more emergency response services toward mental health professionals.

Choose Treatment Over Incarceration. The opioid crisis continues to plague our city. We can take a robust, comprehensive approach to addressing this growing issue in order to save lives and reduce addiction.

- Require all city officials and first responders to be **trained to carry the life-saving drug Naloxone as well a list of available recovery resources**.
- Establish more **Crisis Stabilization Units** in local hospitals to divert people with substance use disorder away from the criminal justice system and toward the public health system.
- Adopt the **Huntington model** of providing trauma-informed care and mental health services for first responders.
- Support the creation and expansion of robust **harm reduction** programs that follow CDC guidelines.

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- Create a local **Recovery Task Force**, majority-run by people with substance use disorder (and including representatives of other agencies), to seek out additional funding from state and federal sources for local treatment and prevention. Collaborate with the county health department to hire a full-time staff person to lead the task force and seek additional resources.
- Instruct the City Attorney to **join all relevant lawsuits** against the pharmaceutical companies who have profited off of the city's epidemic.

Make Morgantown a beautiful, healthy, welcoming place. Morgantown's art, parks, and public spaces are essential for our economy and the well being of our children and families.

- Increase public space and develop a long-term sidewalk plan (building off of the Morgantown Pedestrian Plan of 2010) for the city -- working to refurbish, build, and maintain priority network sidewalks (in partnership with the Morgantown Pedestrian Safety Board). Advocate for lowering the trucking weight limits to the federal limit to reduce deterioration of our roads and infrastructure.
- Utilize a full-time grant writer to seek dollars for local arts, parks, school and community gardens, trails, efforts to re-route truck traffic, building rehab and community development.
- Address pollution wherever possible. Renegotiate the contract with Republic trash pick-up, improve coordination of trash removal, and police noise, solid waste, air, and water pollution.
- Continue the past council's support of the Mayor's Climate Agreement.
- Support opportunities for annexation as opportunities to set a high standard for community input, sustainable development, affordable housing set-asides, public safety, walkability, and other initiatives to garner long-term benefits to Morgantown's quality of life and bottom line.
- Remove barriers to civic participation by increasing the availability of voting, including offering vote by mail. Establish office hours for city councilors and other public officials.
- Enact anti-discrimination policy changes to make Morgantown the second city in West Virginia (after Huntington) to achieve HRC's highest possible score on the Municipal Equality Index. Prosecute discrimination in all its forms -- pass the state's first municipal Crown Act, offer menstrual products in public buildings, and end racial discrimination in health access.
- Pursue menstrual equity by eliminating the city taxes on these products and making them available in all city funded buildings.

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- Work to fill every Morgantown Board and Commission with a majority of people who are directly impacted by the work of that group and seek representation in city hiring and decision-making.

Contact morgantowncantwait@gmail.com with any questions, concerns, or ideas for how to make this platform stronger.

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