

**Keys to the Candidates**  
**Compiled by the League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County**  
**for the**  
**2016 General Election**

**Monroe County Commissioner, District 2**

Nelson Shaffer (R)  
Julie Thomas (D)

***1. What are your qualifications for the office you are seeking?***

**SHAFFER:** I lived in the county, urbanizing area, or city for 40+ years, and understand complex interplays. I managed money, personnel, and activities of complex, technical projects and organizations. Research scientist 40+ years, Director of Indiana Academy of Science 11+ years, own small business-Nannovations. Officer science groups, I.U. Staff Council, civic, church, and national groups. Started several nonprofits. Attended Citizen's Academies for the County and City. Love the place and people. Solid Waste Advisory Board member.

**THOMAS:** I have experience in county government and in community service that informs my work as a public servant: County Commissioner (December 2012 - present); County Council (2009-12); Solid Waste Management District Board (currently serve as President); Plan Commission (since 2009). Community volunteer at Middle Way House (On-Scene Advocate since 1995) and at Planned Parenthood; past service on Board of Directors of Middle Way House, Planned Parenthood-Indiana; past volunteer with Bridges out of Poverty (SCCAP).

***2. What are your top three priorities for your office and, if elected, how will you address them?***

**SHAFFER:** I. Decrease unneeded complexity of county rules and ever expanding tax burden. Starting new or expanding existing businesses are burdened with nit picking rules that discourage increases in the tax base. Many have related excess interference in operations.  
II. Need more transparent, efficient, and representative government. Well publicized and accessible (time and place) meetings. Regular summaries of events. Diversity of views and individuals on boards and commissions. Use of county email – no secrets. Regular forums to seek public input on significant problems. No midnight surprises on commissioner salaries, parking structure, and other issues.  
III. Rapid, nimble responses to crises or new issues including consultation with city, I.U., surrounding counties, and the state. No tech business successes despite years of talking. Make better use county assets.

**THOMAS:** I will build upon the successes of recent years in environmental sustainability. The county is completing an energy savings program with an annual savings of at least \$150,000. We have a full solar panel array on two county buildings. I will pursue additional energy savings,

work to improve our fleet's fuel efficiency and continue to develop our trail system. Second, I will continue to engage residents in county government. A new website will be available soon and [speakupmonroecounty.com](http://speakupmonroecounty.com) encourages residents to offer their input on county government. I would like to bring the citizen's academy to our website. Third, as the legislative and executive branch of county government, we can continue to focus on providing more effective and efficient operations. [www.juliethomas.us](http://www.juliethomas.us)

### ***3. What services for individuals, families, and groups experiencing crisis and trauma do you feel are most critical to support and fund?***

**SHAFFER:** I. Fire, safety, and emergency services are critical, but stressed. Increases in county option taxes will help, but some services will still be underfunded. Jail occupancy is high and new facilities may be mandated. Recidivism must be reduced by programs such as Updraft. The patchwork of city/county areas needs to be resolved and urbanizing areas addressed.

II. Affordable housing is already an issue, but some wish to bring in more dependent families or people. Some resolution such as strict vetting of refugees is needed before we burden the already overtaxed systems.

III. The county needs coordinated rapid response teams to act quickly if weather or other emergencies occur. Lesser disruptions also require preplanning and probably additional resources.

**THOMAS:** The Board of Commissioners' annual budget includes support for important area agencies including Volunteers in Medicine. In 2015, I was proud to support the work of the Monroe County Health Department as it developed a plan to implement a syringe exchange program. The HIV crisis in Scott county (with more than 150 cases reported) could have been avoided. This is important work to protect the health of all Monroe County residents. As the fiscal body of Monroe County government, the Council appropriates \$100,000 through the Sophia Travis Community Services Grant Fund to provide funding for vital social services needs throughout Monroe County including youth services, shelter and food. I support this wonderful mechanism to provide additional funding to our county's worthy social service agencies.

### ***4. What are the challenges presented by the proposed Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and how might these be met?***

**SHAFFER:** Recycling has been a long-term and positive community commitment. The MRF was to be a next step but it has been mishandled. After considerable research, visits to existing MRFs, and assessment of cost/benefit ratios, a MRF was recommended by the citizen's Advisory Board. A MRF was purchased, but never built or operated as planned at the closed landfill. We need to implement some sort of MRF but probably located closer to county center and transport routes. Cooperation between county, city, I.U., and others is required. Single stream or separated recycles methods need to be decided. An expensive consultant is probably not needed if the community can come together. We should investigate natural gas and metal harvesting from the closed landfill as done elsewhere.

**THOMAS:** The mission of the Monroe County Solid Waste Management District is to reduce the amount of garbage sent to the landfill. It does not further the District's mission to bundle and sell existing "clean" recyclables – this is material we already collect. However, to create a dual-stream MRF would mean that we would collect "clean" recyclables AND operate a facility to recover and sell recyclable material from household trash. While this supports the district's mission, it must be economically sustainable as an operation. A consultant can determine the volume of material necessary to ensure the financial viability of operating a dual-stream MRF. I support the idea of developing a dual-stream MRF but it must be economically sustainable.

***5. What are the challenges presented by the Monroe County Urbanizing Area Plan and how might these be met?***

**SHAFFER:** The proposed plan is quite complex with varying requirements and many unneeded restrictions. There was little consideration of northeast parts of Bloomington where a new hospital campus is likely to spark growth and increased traffic. We need at least one east-west corridor and I would like to see a new terrain highway from the Sample Road I-69 exit to S.R. 446. Consideration for increased truck traffic is needed, especially if the county becomes a regional distribution center. Restrictions on developments especially in the urbanizing (old two-mile fringe) area need to be lessened to allow development. We need to set aside area for a Limestone Heritage Park at Tapp Road. Intergovernmental agreements about utilities, roads, public transportation, and other infrastructures need to be forged.

**THOMAS:** The urbanizing area plan will help us meet the challenges of the new economy while protecting our environment, saving taxpayer dollars and ensuring a high quality of life. In collaboration with residents, business owners, and community stakeholders we have worked to ensure that the new ordinances will be easier to understand and more flexible. Commercial and high-density residential development should occur where the infrastructure exists to support it – including roadways, intersections, emergency services, bridges, and sewer service. The ability to re-develop existing commercial buildings by subdividing them will accommodate the needs of our changing economy. Commercial zoning should not be based on the specific activity, but instead on the impact of the business (traffic, parking, noise, etc.). The next public comment session is 10/18/16.