

Editor's note: GwinnettForum today is publishing the answers to questions it put to candidates for the Mulberry election in November. We now present answers from all 15 candidates in the race. This will continue in this space until the election. Encourage your Mulberry neighbors to learn here about the candidates, and even to subscribe (it's free) to GwinnettForum by going to www.gwinnettforum.com to the new subscriber box on the right side of the front page.

DISTRICT ONE CANDIDATES

Katherine Minchener

Age: 44.

Where were you born: Miami, Fla.

Tell me about your family and what they do: My husband, Carlos, is a maintenance technician at a senior community in Hoschton. I'm the mother of three boys, aged 12, 8 and 6.

How long have you resided in Gwinnett? It will be 3 years come November.

Where did you go to school, and what were your majors?
I went to Florida International University and majored in political science.

Your job: *Real estate paralegal.*

Where do you go to church? Church by the Glades (in person in Florida but now online)

Been in the military? *No.*

What is the last book you have read? *Where The Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens*

Run for political office before? Is so where, and outcome? *No.*

Answer using 100 words: Why are you running for Mulberry office? I moved to this area because my husband and I wanted to raise our boys in a small-town community with family values. I knew that Mulberry was headed in the direction of the home we'd left when we began seeing rapid growth. So, because of my extensive real estate and legal background, I felt I had to step forward and offer up that expertise to help prevent further irresponsible growth that will only strain our infrastructure. I know what smart development should look like, and how to achieve it.



Tim Sullivan

Age: 67.

Born: Boston, Mass.

Tell me about your family and what they do: I'm a Senior QA Analyst, and my wife is an office manager. We have two grown daughters and seven grandchildren. One of the girls works in Insurance and the other is a stay-at-home mom.

How long have you resided in Gwinnett? 42 years

Where did you go to school, and what were your majors? Went to Sequoyah High in Doraville. I attended South Georgia Junior College in Douglas Ga. After my wife and I got married, I attended and graduated from Kennesaw State University, as a night student, with a degree in Management Info Systems.

Your job: Senior Quality Assurance Analyst with Taylor Technologies in Lawrenceville.

Where do you go to church? Prince of Peace

Been in the military? No

What is the last book you have read? C# Programming yellow book

Run for political office before? Is so, where, and outcome? Ran for Gwinnett Commissioner for District 4. Lost in the runoff to John Hurd by a couple of hundred votes.

Answer using 100 words: Why are you running for Mulberry office: "I decided to run for City Council to better serve my community. My dedication to serving our community is at the heart of this decision. I have been active in local zoning issues for more that 25 years, working with local neighborhoods on Hamilton Mill Road, the Planning commission and the BOC to ensure proper, logical growth that enhances our quality of life. I co-founded the Hamilton Mill Homeowners Coalition to further our mutual interest in proper growth. Our group was also responsible for creating the Hamilton Mill Overlay district which sets minimum standards for development."



DISTRICT TWO CANDIDATES

Michael Coker

Age: 38

Born: Northside Hospital in Dunwoody

Tell me about your family and what they do: I live with my wife and three children. My parents still live in Mulberry in the house I grew up in.

How long have you resided in Gwinnett? I have lived in Gwinnett County my entire life.

Where did you go to school, and what were your majors? I graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in business. I then graduated with a law degree from Georgia State University College of Law.

Your job: I am a lawyer in Lawrenceville, Georgia.

Where do you go to church? Hamilton Mill United Methodist Church.

Been in the military? No military service.

What is the last book you have read? *The Great Gatsby*.

Run for political office before? Is so, where, and outcome? No. Although I have not run for political office, I led the Citizens for Mulberry organization to a successful YES vote.

Answer using 100 words: Why are you running for Mulberry office? I love this community and have lived here since I was 8 years old. When our hometown was under attack by greedy developers, I stepped forward. I created the organization *Citizens for Mulberry* and led the city to a successful YES vote. I spent my own time and money to defend our city from developer lawsuits. I connected with other Gwinnett city leaders to gain wisdom and advice. I am the only candidate with the tools to make our community thrive on day one, and I ask for your vote to finish the work that we started.”



Stephen G. Emert

Age: 50

Born: Cincinnati, Ohio

Tell me about your family and what they do: My wife is a teacher for Gwinnett County. Both of my children attend school in the Millcreek Cluster at Duncan Creek and Osborne Middle.

How long have you resided in Gwinnett? Since 1988.

Where did you go to school, and what were your majors? I graduated from North Georgia College majoring in Political Science. I graduated from Regent University in 2000 with a juris doctor, or law degree.

Your job: After practicing law in Gwinnett for nearly 24 years, I recently accepted the position of Georgia State Counsel with CATIC title insurance company.

Where do you go to church? 12Stone – Hamilton Mill campus.

Been in the military? No.

What is the last book you have read? ‘The Religion of the Apostles’ by Stephen De Young.

Run for political office before? Is so, where, and outcome? No

Answer using 100 words: Why are you running for Mulberry office? “Having graduated from Dacula High School in 1992, I have experienced first-hand the growth of Gwinnett and understand why people want to live in Mulberry. Growth should be thoughtful, strategic, and planned by local planners. I want my children and their friends to call Gwinnett their home and to love being in Mulberry when they are ready to raise their own families. My experience in law, real estate, business, and even as a coach on my son’s youth football team, will serve Mulberry in its inception as a city.”



Adebukola (Bukie) Fajoriji

Age: 41.

Where were you born: Toledo, Ohio

Tell me about your family and what they do: I'm married to Christopher Fajoriji and we are blessed with three children. My oldest two attend the Mill Creek school cluster.

How long have you resided in Gwinnett? Five years.

Where did you go to school, and what were your majors? M.Sc Business Analytics, University of Cincinnati, Ohio, B.Sc Civil Engineering at the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

Your job: Financial Planning and Analytics, with expertise in B2B Saas Go-to-Market teams.

Where do you go to church? Victory Church, Hamilton Mill.

Been in the military? No.

What is the last book you have read? *Discerning the Voice of God* by Priscilla Shirer.

Run for political office before? Is so where, and outcome? No.

Answer using 100 words: Why are you running for Mulberry office?

I'm running for City Council in Mulberry to ensure our growth reflects community values and that every resident's voice matters. As your councilwoman, I'm committed to transparent, inclusive, fiscally responsible decision-making that promotes sustainable development without outpacing infrastructure. I've worked alongside my HOA to successfully oppose disruptive zoning changes that threatened our neighborhood. Now, I'm ready to bring my expertise in strategic finance, Go-to-Market, and advocacy to drive economic growth and opportunity for the entire district while ensuring responsible, balanced progress for all residents.



Ricky Mangum

Age: 55.

Born: Lawrenceville.

About my family: My dear Dad retired from Kraft foods and has recently passed away. My mother has lived in Hoschton (Mulberry) for over 30 years. I have two older brothers and they both live in Georgia. I have two sons. My oldest son is proudly serving in the Navy. My pride and joy lives with me and he's planning to be a history teacher.



How long I have lived in Gwinnett County: 55 years.

Where I went to school/major: I attended North Gwinnett High School and Gwinnett Technical College for Electronics Technology.

My Job: U.S. Postal Service.

Church: 12 Stone.

Last book read: Bible.

Run for political office before? No.

Why I'm running for City Council? I'm a Dad and I care about my family and the area I live in. Local control deserves local leadership. I have lived my entire life (55 years) in Gwinnett and the last 20 years in Hoschton. I'm excited for our future as a new city and I want to be on the City Council to help make decisions that will mold our new city into something great. Mulberry City started out as an idea and our future will be based on ideas and sound solutions. I believe "Love your neighbor as yourself." Let's Make Mulberry Great.

Mary Ellen Small

Age: 56

Born: Norwich, Conn. and raised in the North Carolina mountains

Family: I have three adult children. My eldest son is an auto technician, my daughter is a licensed Esthetician, and my youngest son is working in the jewelry business.

How long have you resided in Gwinnett? 33 years

Education: Graduated high school in Franklin, N.C.; Attended Boston University and Georgia State University; studied Communications before switching to a Biology major with Chemistry minor; Emory Continuing Education: Paralegal certificate course.

Your job: Real Estate Sales

Church? Free Chapel

Been in the military? No

What is the last book you have read? “How to Heal Your Metabolism” by Kate Deering

Run for political office before? No

Why are you running for Mulberry office? “I am running for Mulberry City Council office to guarantee that every member of our community has a voice and is properly represented. The city was established with the intent to regulate growth, which has led to unease among some property owners who fear they may not achieve optimal value upon selling. There are also concerns regarding potential increases in the cost of services and the ability to uphold the promise of no city property taxes. My commitment is to diligently oversee expenditures, make prudent choices, and ensure that decisions benefit everyone.”



DISTRICT THREE CANDIDATES

Chris Cook

Age: 50

Where were you born: Houston, Tex.

Tell me about your family and what they do: The majority of my family lives in Georgia and Alabama. My daughter Emily just graduated and has started college.

How long have you resided in Gwinnett? 45 years.

Where did you go to school, and what were your majors? Gainesville College for engineering.

Your job: Home improvement contractor.

Where do you go to church? 12Stone.

Been in the military? No.

What is the last book you have read? The Bible

Run for political office before? Is so where, and outcome? No.

Answer using 100 words: Why are you running for Mulberry office? I was asked and encouraged to run by several of my neighbors, friends, and clients. Living and working in the Mulberry area for over 15 years, I personally know about a thousand of my neighbors and want the best for our area. I have no personal agenda. We voted for limiting high-density zoning in our area, as well as no additional taxes, so I intend to represent my neighbors to the best of my ability to implement these desires.



Ryan Mester

Age: 34

Where were you born: Connecticut.

Tell me about your family and what they do: No significant other, no pets, and no children.

How long have you resided in Gwinnett? 23 years.

Where did you go to school, and what were your majors? I have a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology from Georgia Southern University.

Your job: Operations Supervisor for a multinational conglomerate holding company.

Where do you go to church? I do not attend church, but am a follower of the Catholic faith.

Been in the military? No.

What is the last book you have read? *The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli.

Run for political office before? Is so, where, and outcome? No.

Answer using 100 words: Why are you running for Mulberry office? “To save taxpayers money by preventing fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement.”



Kyle Shields

Age: 56.

Born: Westminster, Calif.

Family: I have been married to my wife Julie for 23 years. She is a 5th grade teacher at Pucketts Mill Elementary for Gwinnett County. My sons 20 and 17 are both in school. My oldest goes to Georgia College in Milledgeville, Ga. My youngest is a senior at Mill Creek High School and is the first class to do a dual enrollment program with Gwinnett Tech, where he will gain his welding certificate at the end of the year!



How long have you resided in Gwinnett: 18 years

Education: Long Beach State University majored in Industrial Technology Automotive concentration.

Job: I am a small business owner www.drivingforcex.com.

Church: Hamilton Mill Methodist.

Military service: No.

What is the last book you have read? I am not a big book person but I love magazines-Golf, Autoweek, Hot rod.

Run for political office before? No.

Why are you running for Mulberry office? “I am running for The City of Mulberry District 3 City Council. I stepped up for my family, friends and neighbors after listening to the community and how upset people are. Most of us moved here to get away from it all. In the 18 years I have been here, the last 4 have been out of control zoning and building of properties that are not desirable for the residents in district 3. The overcrowded schools and roads, along with antiquated infrastructure in this area can't handle the pace that Gwinnett County has been passing permits and zoning. www.shields4mulberry.com.”

DISTRICT FOUR CANDIDATES

Harris J. Roth

Age: 67

Born: Philadelphia, Penn.

Family: My wife is Daniele M. Roth of 46 years, Daniele M. Roth works as an usher at Coolray **Field**.

How long have you resided in Gwinnett? 32+ years.
Mulberry for 6+ years.

Education: BS Computer Science, University of Pittsburgh, 1985.

Your job: Retired software engineer for 35 years for NCR. Gwinnett County School Bus Driver for 2 years. Part time trolley driver at Lake Lanier.

Church: No religious affiliation.

Been in the military? No.

What is the last book you have read? Jack Reacher.

Run for political office before? No.

Why are you running for Mulberry office? “To fulfill the promise of Mulberry by standing up in good order the first three services inherited from Gwinnett County: Zoning and Planning, Code Enforcement and Storm Water Management. To apply best practices. To build the support infrastructure and hire the people needed to support those three services and the services to come. My focus as District 4 Councilman will be to make these three services as good or better than Gwinnett County. To plan for and inherit other services from Gwinnett County. To serve my fellow residents of Mulberry.”



Michael Rudnick

Age: 44.

Where were you born: Boston, Mass.

Tell me about your family and what they do: I have been married to Meg Rudnick for 17 years. She is a stay at home mom to our 16 year old special needs son, Brady.

How long have you resided in Gwinnett? 2010-2015 and 2018-2024.

Where did you go to school, and what were your majors? University of Georgia; Speech Communication class of '03. Currently in the last two semesters of Masters of Public Administration (MPA) Class of '25.

Your job: Fleet Director; City of Lawrenceville.

Where do you go to church? Hamilton Mill United Methodist.

Been in the military? No.

What is the last book you have read? *The New Public Personnel Administration*, 7th edition.

Run for political office before? Is so, where, and outcome? Yes, 2022 School Board Gwinnett County. Lost.

Answer using 100 words: Why are you running for Mulberry office?

“Mulberry must be built on a foundation to succeed. It is critical to have the correct people to lead this City to a place of prosperity. I am going to bring expertise to the new city to help set our community to serve the 40K plus citizens. I am ready to put in the time and effort to ensure that this is the best city in Gwinnett where people love to call home. We must have the correct people in office to make the hard and at times unpopular decisions for the benefit of all. www.rudnickgwinnett.com.”



DISTRICT FIVE CANDIDATES

Kevin Arocha

Age: 30.

Born: : Miami, Fla.

Tell me about your family and what they do: My amazing wife, Kaitlin, is a former schoolteacher who is currently dedicated to raising our daughter and managing our household. Together, we have a 5-year-old daughter, Emilia Rose.



How long have you resided in Gwinnett? My family and I have lived in Georgia for five years, with approximately half that as residents of Gwinnett.

Where did you go to school, and what were your majors? I earned my undergraduate degree from the University of Florida, where I majored in Political Science. I subsequently graduated with my Juris Doctor from Duke University School of Law.

Your job: I am a corporate litigation attorney. I serve as the Associate General Counsel for a large Atlanta-based company.

Where do you go to church? I was raised Catholic and still hold those traditions close. More recently, I have found comfort in the services offered at Hamilton Mill Church (a non-denominational Christian church).

Been in the military? No.

What is the last book you have read? “The Perfect Police State” by Geoffery Cain.

Run for political office before? Is so where, and outcome? This is my first time running for public office. While I have always followed politics as a matter of personal interest, I have never considered myself politically ambitious. My decision to run in this instance was prompted by the unwavering encouragement of my neighbors in the aftermath of our recent opposition against an untenable rezoning proposal on Jim Moore Road in Mulberry District 5. Pursuant to my involvement in the same, I was selected to represent our community and entrusted to lead our legal negotiations with the rezoning applicant/property developer, which cumulated in substantial and material concessions to our community’s (100).

Doug Ingram

Age: 48

Where were you born: Bismarck, Ill.

Tell me about your family and what they do: I have been married to my wife Kirsten for 20 years. She worked for the CDC and as a family nurse practitioner before leaving to focus full time on helping raise our three kids, who are now 18, 15, and 12.



How long have you resided in Gwinnett? Since 2002.

Where did you go to school, and what were your majors? United States Merchant Marine Academy (Kings Point, NY) Bachelor of Science in Transportation ; University of Georgia, Masters of Business Administration.

Your job: Small Business Owner and Entrepreneur (www.queuelogix.com & www.goodshepherdroofing.com).

Where do you go to church? Attend a couple different churches in the area.

Been in the military? Yes.

What is the last book you have read? *The First Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill George Washington* by Brad Meltzer.

Run for political office before? No.

Answer using 100 words: Why are you running for Mulberry office? I'm running to ensure Mulberry starts strong with leadership that's transparent, accountable, and prepared for the future. My years of business experience give me the skills to navigate the complexities of building a new city, from financial management to forging key partnerships with neighboring areas. I'm dedicated to fostering a community where all voices are heard and everyone has a chance to succeed. Let's work together to make sure we have a Strong Start for Mulberry. Learn more at www.dougformulberry.com, and I'd be honored to earn your vote for District 5.

Michele Yvette Sims

Age: 54.

Where were you born: Mount Vernon, N.Y.

Tell me about your family and what they do: I am single.

How long have you resided in Gwinnett? I have resided in Gwinnett County for 15 of the 22 years I have lived in Georgia. That time was interrupted by 4 years residing in Dougherty County and 2.5 years in Fulton County.



Where did you go to school, and what were your majors? I have my bachelor's degree in political science from Wellesley College and my JD degree from the University of Iowa.

Your job: Managing Assistant District Attorney.

Where do you go to church? Free Chapel.

Been in the military? No.

What is the last book you have read? I am currently re-reading *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* by Agatha Christie and *Love Anyway: The Secret to a Happy and Fulfilled Life* by Adrienne Cooley.

Run for political office before? Is so where, and outcome? No.

Answer using 100 words: Why are you running for Mulberry office?

I was raised in a small community where neighbors respected and looked out for each other. It's what I wanted when I moved to Auburn in 2021. I've been stunned by the out of controlled growth. Mulberry can prevent this and positively shape the future of our community, but we must be united. I want to be a part of this unification. People forget that leadership is not about power but servanthood. My whole career/ministry has been about service. I have the ability and passion to help Mulberry thrive and respectfully request your vote. Please visit me at michelesims.com.

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