

# Candidate Responses – Orange County Board of Supervisors

**Ellen Pitera**

Question 1: Position Seeking:

EP: Board of Supervisors, District 3

Question 2: Have you Previously Held this Position?

EP: No

Question 3: Will you be attending the August 23, 2023, Orange County Candidate Showcase?

EP: Yes

Question 4: What is your plan for fostering business growth in the community for the next five years?

EP: Fostering business growth in our community begins with knowing the existing business owners by name and listening to their needs as well as knowing the needs of our community. I am a small business owner so I am already engaged in ongoing conversations with fellow business owners during our day to day operations. I am also a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary of Orange and both of these organizations foster networking, working together to increase business as well as listening to the needs in our community. As the Community Liaison for Orange County Public Schools I am working directly with business owners and students in an effort to find opportunities for students to secure work while they are still students as well as after graduation. I know first hand that business owners are in dire need of a hiring skilled labor. My number one priority for fostering business growth in our community is creating a dedicated space for a Career Technical Education (CTE) Center for Orange County High School. This is a win win for current businesses seeking employees as well as potential businesses moving to our County both knowing that they have employees being well trained, for generations to come. Providing a CTE Center for our students is also a wise investment in the greatest asset in the County, our students.

Question 5: According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Orange County has nearly 100,000 acres of farmland, and is home to approximately 417 farms of all sizes and types. How do you envision your role can best support all types of agricultural operations?

EP: As a farm owner and small business owner on that farm, I know first hand the struggles, stresses and successes of agricultural operations. I am member of Farm Bureau and active on the ELC Board for the Extension Office. Because I have been directly involved with agriculture for my entire life, I know how to advise farmers to the services provided by our County and State that will not only enhance their current operations but preserve it for the future generations of their family. I also know the opportunities available to their children through 4-H and FFA that will support the idea of generational farming, hard work ethics needed for farming and the importance of being part of a farming community.

Question 6: What specific steps do you believe could be taken by the Board of Supervisors, other county officials, or others in the county to help the county attract businesses that will improve the economic well-being of the county without a negative impact upon the quality of life for the county citizens?

EP: Three ways to attract businesses to Orange County that will improve the economic well-being of our county without negatively impacting quality of life include; creating a CTE Center for OCHS that produces highly qualified potential employees, elicit community input on establishing clear zoning ordinances with targeted areas for specific growth, and continue the good work of making broadband internet available to all citizens as well as businesses. All three of these strategies require community engagement and communication which is the backbone to any successful steps of improving economic well being in our County.

Question 7: What steps do you think are most important to support existing businesses and encourage healthy growth?

EP: Existing businesses in Orange County feel supported when they are encouraged by fellow business owners and find ways to network and get involved with our community. I would like to see new business owners be mentored by established business owners so they can help facilitate this process. I would like to see a continued effort be placed on the "spend local" movement. The ODA has done a great job promoting the new Farmer's Market located in the Town of Orange. The Chamber of Commerce also has done a great job highlighting new businesses and educating the community about them. I would also like to see The Orange Review be returned to our community and be a place for businesses to advertise, tell their story and engage with potential customers.

Question 8: How do agriculture and forestry contribute to your vision for economic growth and development within the County?

EP: Farming is our County's largest industry and one that is a gem for our community. In order for it to remain that way, farming that is done with sustainable measures in place creates economic viability for generations to come. The Department of Forestry and Department of Agriculture have a variety of programs available to educate new and established farmers, as well as financially support these programs to make them a reality for all of our farmers.

Question 9: How do you define "social justice" and, from your perspective, how can the BOS ensure fairness for all Orange County residents?

EP: Social justice means that everyone in a community has the same opportunities. Ensuring this fairness, begins with listening and initiating conversation around the issues that have and could divide us as a community. I would like to see our community engage in these conversations in a formal and regular way. Inviting stakeholders from many perspectives of an issue to come to the table together.

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