



2026 Board of County Commissioners
Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE: Tom Phelan

OFFICE SOUGHT: Commissioner District 2

CAMPAIGN ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

PHONE NUMBER(S): [REDACTED]

CAMPAIGN EMAIL: [REDACTED]

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: N/A

I confirm that the responses provided here are my official positions in seeking local office and I understand that EASMC reserves the right to share my responses with members and interested parties.

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: //signed// Thomas Phelan DATE SUBMITTED: 13 Mar 2026

Candidates: To be considered for a recommendation, you must indicate your response to each of the questions. You may use more space than is provided to elaborate on your answers and provide clarification, explanation, and other context, but please be certain to clearly indicate the questions(s) to which you refer. Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to EASMC.

Education Funding and Local Budgets:

1. Do you commit to prioritizing public education funding in future county budgets? What are your top three budget priorities for the public school system?

Yes.

- Core academic instruction (reading, writing, math, science)
- Facilities and safety
- Fiscal discipline

2. How do you plan to fund public school priorities? What are your thoughts on the current county tax and revenue structure and any actions you would take to update the tax code to promote fairness and equity?

I would need to conduct a detailed review of the school systems budget request prior to implementing a plan to fund. I'm an advocate for no new taxes and believe there is adequate revenue with a detailed spending review being required.

3. How would you utilize your budget authority to address shortfalls facing our schools if the state or federal government reduces their commitment(s)?

To address any shortfall from the state/feds, would have to investigate other areas to reduce spending. I'm committed to no new taxes.

4. In many schools, educators are dealing with high class sizes and caseloads. How will you help address critical concerns with educator recruitment and retention in order to ensure we can increase staffing to reduce class sizes and caseloads?

I would advocate for pay scales that are competitive and based on merit/performance.

5. Do you commit to honoring the role of your elected body in upholding the policy and funding mandates associated with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future?

YES NO

How can you help with the shortfall?

I agree in principal with the Blueprint, but it is currently not affordable due to the state's budget shortfalls.

6. Please discuss your philosophy related to charter schools. Do you believe they should be expanded in our county public school structure?

No, don't believe they should be expanded into the public school structure. I certainly believe in school choice for parents for the best options for students.

7. How will your budget address increased needs for mental health supports for students and educators in our community, where mental health access is so limited?

The focus should certainly be on the student's needs, but would have to review the school systems budget request in this area.

8. What is your opinion on local efforts to create and support community schools?

I believe the focus should be on the student's core educational needs vice the potential increased cost and bureaucracy associated with community school programs.

9. SMCPS is in a period of enrollment decline. Our newest building is 10 years old. What should influence any decisions to redistrict?

It should be based on class sizes and school enrollment numbers.

Public Funding for Private Schools:

10. Do you support or oppose allocating public funding to non-public school students through voucher programs?

_____ SUPPORT X OPPOSE

Additional comments:

Parents should decide what is best for their students.

11. Do you support or oppose allowing non-public school students to participate in public school extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.)?

 X SUPPPORT _____ OPPOSE

Additional comments:

Provides opportunities for the students that might not be available at private schools.

Collective Bargaining:

12. Do you support or oppose school employees gaining the right to strike?

_____ SUPPORT X OPPOSE

Additional comments:

A strike by school employees would impact the pursuit of academic excellence for students.

13. What is your understanding of the nature of the relationship between the Board of Education, Superintendent, county government, and union as it relates to negotiations, budget development, and administration of schools? How do you see yourself utilizing the power of your office in working within this structure?

As far as I know, the relationship is good. Continued respectful communication between all parties is key to ensuring student' needs are kept at the forefront. I would certainly develop good relationships with the Board of Education and school administrators.

14. Do you commit to meeting with union leadership to talk about the needs facing our schools (including salary and staffing levels) and the revenue or other budget actions necessary to meet those needs?

X _____ YES _____ NO

Additional comments:

None

Racial and Social Justice:

15. EASMC supports honesty in education. To encourage critical thinking within our classrooms, we believe educators should have professional autonomy on how to implement curriculum to meet the needs of our students. Do you support or oppose this position? How would you respond to political pressure threatening that professional autonomy?

X _____ SUPPORT _____ OPPOSE

Additional comments:

Key word here is “professional” for the autonomy of teachers. Personal views/opinions need to stay out of the classroom. Academic excellence should be the priority.

16. Do you support or oppose a curriculum that reflects the perspective and background of diverse learners? How would you respond to political pressure requesting changes to content and curriculum?

X _____ SUPPORT _____ OPPOSE

Additional comments:

Need to focus on academic improvement for all students.

17. What specific policy goals and objectives will you pursue aimed at addressing racial and social justice, including support of diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students and providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and supports?

I would focus on equal opportunities vice equal outcomes.

18. Immigration enforcement is a matter of federal jurisdiction. What is your position on how local law enforcement should interact with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement? And how will you work to ensure school grounds, bus stops, and other school spaces are safe havens against immigration enforcement actions?

Our local Sheriff’s office should be able to coordinate with ICE where needed. School Resource Officers are also key to providing for student’s safety on school grounds.

19. Stable, safe, and affordable housing is necessary for all students to be able to succeed in school and in the recruitment of educators, including education support professionals, to live in the communities they serve. How do you plan to address the housing crisis in the county?

We'll need to ensure smart infrastructure planning for responsible residential growth. Need to look at ways to renovate/preserve existing affordable housing.

Privatization and Support for Education Support Professionals (ESP's):

20. Are you in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance services rather than have those services provided by the Board of Education employees?

SUPPORT OPPOSE

Additional comments:

Not all services may be good for privatization, would need careful review of the pros/cons.

21. Too many ESPs work second jobs and struggle to provide for their families, buy homes, save for their futures, and afford community or four-year college tuition for their children to learn a trade and plan a career. The looming threats of privatization by school districts, which would import even lower-paid workers from outside areas, risk the stability of schools and communities and further undermine the value of ESPs and their jobs.

ESP's across the state are organizing to build presence, strength, and power in a campaign focused on a bill of rights that defines the issues long nagging these dedicated employees and now threatening not only the recruitment of new employees but the retention of dedicated veteran employees. You can read about the [ESP Bill of Rights here](#).

Do you support the ESP Bill of Rights?

SUPPORT OPPOSE

Additional Comments:

See previous answer, not all ESP's services would benefit from privatization.

22. Please share how you would use your office to help make the ESP Bill of Rights a reality in the county.

Additional detailed review of any draft would be required.

Essay Questions:

A. Why are you running for this position? What personal attributes, characteristics, and experiences make you the right candidate for this position?

St. Mary's County deserves leadership that understands our unique mix of historic communities, rural land, and growing neighborhoods as well as our partnership with NAS Patuxent River. I served over 26 years in the U. S. Navy as a pilot and test pilot. These included increasing leadership roles in multiple units. Following retirement from the Navy, I worked for 20 years supporting our warfighters as a defense contractor. I'm a graduate of Leadership Southern Maryland, Citizens and Sheriff's academy. Additionally, I'm a past board member of The Patuxent Partnership (TPP). I understand leadership, accountability and service.

B. What are the top three things you would like to accomplish in the next four years if you are elected to [county commission/BOE]?

- No new taxes and demand fiscal discipline
- Preserve the rural character of our county through responsible residential and commercial growth
- Support the BOE in the pursuit of academic excellence for our students

Additional Information:

Along with this completed questionnaire, please provide an up-to-date bio or resume as well as a current list of endorsements for this election cycle.

Thomas P. Phelan was raised in Moraga, California, and graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1979, where he received a BS in Aerospace Engineering. Designated a Naval Aviator in April 1981, he completed several fleet tours, flying the A-6E Intruder including combat missions during Operation Desert Storm. He received a MS degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School and completed Test Pilot training in Patuxent River, MD.

He was the Commanding Officer for a fleet EA-6B squadron (VAQ-140) and a test squadron (VX-23) at Patuxent River. Additionally, he served as the Program Manager for Aircrew Systems (PMA-202) and finished his Navy career as the Commander, Naval Test Wing Atlantic overseeing numerous aircraft Test & Evaluation programs. He retired from the Navy in Feb 2006.

In Feb 2006, he joined KBR (previously Wyle and KBRwyle) working in Southern Maryland supporting Test & Evaluation efforts at Patuxent River, MD. He served as the company's Flight Director as well as the Director of Air Vehicle Operating Unit and was the Program Manager for the company's Aircrew contract providing flight crew to the test squadrons and Test Pilot School until Sep 2025.

Tom Phelan is married with three grown children and resides in Hollywood, MD.