Herman J. Najoli  
Nonparty Candidate for Hamilton County Commissioner

AIA Cincinnati Survey

1. How has the COVID pandemic affected the Hamilton County budget and how will budget changes impact infrastructure programs and future development plans?

The COVID pandemic has been a big threat to the Hamilton County budget. Moving forward we will need to do more with less. I am running a county-wide campaign with only $3,000 so I am fully cognizant of the pressure of having extraordinarily little resources yet turning out a great performance. The pandemic has eaten into our county coffers but the good news out of the County Administrator’s office is that “the expected reduction in sales tax has not happened” (J. Aluotto, personal communication, September 16, 2020). Revenue that has been restricted in compliance with legal and contractual obligations has kept the county business running. The commissioners should be commended for taking aggressive action to reduce the general fund and being cautious on expenditures.

Infrastructure programs and future development plans will need to be examined very carefully and a scalpel applied to ensure that we are doing only what is prudent. Wisdom is critical at this juncture. A key plank in my platform is the need to be consistent first and in the area of budgeting, I have outlined six things that must be done: Facilitating partnerships for budget implementation; Identifying lard and applying a scalpel to excesses; Stimulating shared services opportunities within jurisdictions; Collaborative conversations between Board and Agencies; Adhering to set budget and constraints tightly; and Leveraging opportunities for revenue growth (www.drnajoli.com/platform). Where necessary, future development plans may need to be delayed. Thankfully, many infrastructure programs are covered by bonds that have already been issued.

2. What are your plans to encourage job growth in industries that can bring higher wages, diverse occupations, and help create new housing and development?

My plan is to create an Office of Resident Advancement through Networked Growth, Entrepreneurial Creativity, and Investment in Neighborhoods for Commercial Innovation (ORANGECINCI). Through ORANGECINCI we will offer incentives for high school graduation with technical degrees that produce a skilled workforce for those industries that bring higher wages, we will prioritize entrepreneurial ventures that have a mentoring component attached to them particularly in construction where learning-on-the-job is highly valued; we will encourage start-ups which are proven arenas for enhancing regional employment; we will invest in talent development with a focus on human capital advancement; and we will implement local governance systems that facilitate more equalized neighborhood revitalization projects.
On housing, we need expanded options for individuals. I live on the Westside of Cincinnati and I’m troubled by the boarded-up homes. We need solutions that are practical and fiscally responsible with an eye on forward-thinking that will elevate our county. We need development that revitalizes our old housing stock. Organizations like AIA can help drive forward thinking in fixing these homes for a better future. I was delighted to see the 2020 HOMEARAMA coming to Walworth Junction from October 10-25. The exposure of local builders and home buyers to LEED certified construction and new construction technology is a boon to local housing and development. As Commissioner I will encourage many similar initiatives.

3. What are your plans to address the shortage of labor in skilled trades essential to future development and growth?

As an educator, I value the learning and development of citizenry, particularly in areas that enhance skilling for labor. I will develop partnerships with institutions of higher learning to push for the adoption of curricula that enhances the development of individuals toward skilled trades. We will push for expanded vocational training and create avenues through which youth that cultivate viable pathways into skilled trades. I touched briefly on this through my response to question 2 above. Resident Advancement is key to building local labor.

Additionally, I have designed an avenue through which we can harness the experience of older local workers who have retired. Plank 5 in my platform is ‘Leverage the wisdom of seniors and retirees’. I will create the first ever County Office for Networking Visionary Elders for Relational Transformation (CONVERT). CONVERT will be an avenue for retirees who have been hardworking citizens of Hamilton County to catch a new vision. This initiative will be the nation’s first-ever Commissioner-led initiative to provide seniors and retirees with an abundantly fulfilling, constructive, and innovative way to invest their time. We want to provide seniors and retirees with an opportunity to convert their latter years into their best years yet. This will be through being connected with opportunities for mentoring small business owners, coaching entrepreneurs, advising youth, challenging the homeless, developing kids, and giving back.

4. What are your plans to help small businesses in Hamilton County recover from COVID19, grow, and thrive?

Small businesses are the backbone of our local economy. In every business that I have visited since the start of the pandemic, I have made it a point to ask the owners how the pandemic has affected their businesses. In every single conversation, business owners have stated that they are doing well. In my conversation with the County Administrator, he reiterated that sales tax showed a reduction only in June/July but has been strong since then. A serious economist should look at this preponderance of evidence and conclude that we are on the right track. The
ORANGECINCI plan that I mentioned above applies equally to small businesses and not just to job growth in specific industries.

5. **What is your position on zoning changes and development incentives to encourage more housing construction, especially multi-family housing?**

The purpose of zoning, in my opinion, is to secure a long-term vision that works for the community. In that vein, it is my belief that zoning, and design of good homes, should go together as a hand-in-glove. Architects and administrators should be able to work together to come up with zoning codes that are futuristic. As County Commissioner, I will review every element of our zoning code to ensure that it fits in with a strong vision of the future. Using data from longitudinal studies of population and trends within communities, we can shape the character of our communities based on how people are already living their lives. As we mark Hamilton County’s 230 years of existence, zoning must adapt to modern demands and continue to adapt to community structure.

**About Dr. Herman Najoli,**  
*Independent Candidate, Hamilton County Commission*

Dr. Herman Najoli is a resident of Price Hill who is currently running as an Independent Candidate for Hamilton County Commissioner. He holds a Doctoral degree in Organizational Leadership, having completed his dissertation on Wisdom and Organizational Citizenship Behavior in Leaders. He has Masters degrees in Organizational Leadership and Advanced Leadership Studies and a Bachelor’s degree in Economics and Commerce. He is serving on the Hamilton County Tax Incentive Review Commission (TIRC) and has written four books, most recently Public Servants in Government, Education, and Nonprofit Sectors. Herman and his wife, Danyetta, have two children.

For more information about drnajoli and his campaign to bring seismic change to Hamilton County, please see below:

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