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National Parks Trust manager runs for Jefferson board seat

Kit McGinnis, 43, says she thinks her job experience has prepared her to be a county commissioner

By BETH HENRY / Journal Staff Writer

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CHARLES TOWN — A nonprofit manager with experience in land conservation hopes to make a positive difference to her community by entering the race for the Jefferson County Commission.

Kit McGinnis, 43, is a Democratic candidate for the Jefferson County Commission's Kabletown seat. McGinnis will face current Circuit Clerk Patricia "Patsy" Noland in the primary election on May 13. The Democratic winner will then face Republican Frank Kubic on Nov. 4.

McGinnis said she's excited about getting her campaign moving forward through fundraising efforts and setting up her platform. This is the first time she's run for office, but she said she is ready to step into public service.

"I feel like my professional experience and educational background have prepared me well to be a county commissioner," she said Monday, adding that she is familiar with a wide range of management responsibilities, including planning and budget tasks.

McGinnis works for the National Park Trust as a land projects manager, and she is leading a coalition of area citizens in an effort to preserve the Washington family properties in Jefferson County. She has also been involved with development issues in Charles Town; she was appointed to the Charles Town Citizen's Advisory Council after there was public opposition to the city's expanded urban growth boundary plans.

Her work background includes 11 years in nonprofit management; three years as a sustainable development and comprehensive planning consultant in Chapel Hill, N.C.; four years as a business news reporter for the Wall Street Journal; and one year as a Henry Luce Foundation fellow in Southeast Asia, where she produced documentary films.

McGinnis earned master's degrees in business administration and regional planning from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Her studies specialized in sustainable economic development.

McGinnis grew up in Montana and Arizona, and she received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Colorado, Boulder, in 1988. She met her husband in Jefferson County and they have been married for seven years. They have two children, ages 5 and 3, and they are members of the Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church.

She said she hopes to address a number of issues if elected to the commission in order to make sure that the community remains a great place to live.

"As a county commissioner, I would work to ensure a high quality of life in our community, which means I would foster vibrant local economies with good jobs here — built on locally owned businesses, farms, new high-tech jobs and heritage tourism businesses," she said.

She added that she is an advocate of thriving local economies, historic and environmental protection, inter-governmental cooperation and transparent governance.

In addition to those issues, McGinnis said she is aware that citizens are concerned about traffic, high property tax increases and zoning changes. She said she is paying attention to those concerns.

"I want to hear from people," she said. "I know what I think ... but I want to hear from people about what they think and what issues impact them."

She also encourages all residents to vote in the primary and general elections, and she wants to make sure that registered Independent voters know that they can vote in the Democratic primary election for the first time on May 13.

McGinnis can be contacted through e-mail at kit@kitmcginnis.org. She said she looks forward to meeting new people throughout her campaign.

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