

# Election 2022: Mike Choi For Chatham Township Committee

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November 1, 2022



Mike Choi shared with Patch why he is running for election to the Chatham Township Committee in 2022.  
(Courtesy of Mike Choi)

CHATHAM, NJ — Four candidates are running for two open seats on the Chatham Township Committee this November.

Democratic incumbent Stacey Ewald is running alongside Mike Choi and will face Republican challengers Ron Rubino and Dawn Flynn for their seats on the governing body in November.

Patch sent out emails to all candidates to the email addresses listed for their campaign provided to the office of the clerk. (All of the candidates were given the same questions).

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The responses received will get published between now and Election Day.

Here are candidate Mike Choi's answers below:

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- **Name:** Mike Choi
- **Age:** 48
- **Town of residence:** Chatham Township
- **Position sought:** Township Committee
- **Party affiliation:** Democrat
- **Family:** My lovely wife and two daughters (in a hurry to grow up)
- **Education:** BA, Economics, Columbia University
- **Occupation:** Real Estate Developer
- **Previous or current elected appointed office:** N/A

### Why are you seeking elective office?

I started a journey years ago to serve civically and pay it forward for the Township because being a father (of two young girls) really does change you. I realized that the community they are stepping into would be partly of my making. I faithfully contributed wherever I could be impactful. I found myself coaching our Chatham girls' lacrosse and soccer, serving on the Township Planning Board and now campaigning as a Township Committee hopeful. The Committee is a place where I believe my skills and experience as a developer and institutional investor can be brought to bear to address the forthcoming challenges of our Township.

### If elected, what do you hope to accomplish while serving on the council?

With subject matter experience, I would address ongoing development and affordable housing. My familiarity presenting before municipal boards, conceiving site plans and managing real estate projects will benefit the Committee as we engage with developers seeking project approvals for density as well as the State with regard to fulfilling our affordable housing obligation. I would anticipate to proactively plan, welcome residents' input and scrutinize our master plan (as it is outdated and vulnerable to savvy developers) in order to lay the groundwork for practical development while maintaining the desirable feel and lifestyle of the Township.

On fiscal management, the discipline of deciding when, where and how much funds should be spent is a deeply familial practice to me as a private equity professional. I have served as a financial steward for the billions of funds entrusted to the firm from university endowments, state pension plans, family offices and high net worth individuals. This battle-tested discipline and decision-making process is what I intend to bring to the Committee. As a steward of taxpayer's monies, I would seek to deliver favorable fiscal outcomes by prudently managing expenses, seeking cost-savings through shared services and grant funding and thoughtfully investing in our infrastructure with tax stability in mind.

**What do you think is the most pressing issue facing residents right now and what do you intend to do about it?**

What I can share based on my door knocking thus far is that overdevelopment/affordable housing, political divisiveness and fiscal prudence are often-voiced concerns.

I'll briefly tackle political divisiveness in this section. Candidly, I think divisiveness is rather significant because it not only affects our ability to govern well but also the quality of life amongst Township residents. And my deep concern is that Township politics seems to be metastasizing from political agita to now real political sickness. Committee meetings are unhinged. The Planning Board has been unduly influenced by politics. The angry, polarizing diatribes in our local media abound. And real tragedy is the political gamesmanship of our Republican colleagues as they dodge debates, besmirch candidates and mislead residents with poor information or worse deceitful words. So much energy and resources are wasted putting politics before good governance.

I share with residents that I am unencumbered by this political theatre, and I put forth my civic service on the Township Planning Board and campaign as proof. I don't believe in negative attack ads because I believe the campaign should be about your qualifications and desire for the job. My service on the Planning Board is integrity-driven and thorough with regard to reviewing plans and equitably applying municipal land use laws. I have cut my teeth in competitive, risk capital industries demanding grueling hours, analytic skills, negotiating and weighty decision-making with vast sums of money on the line. I'm fortunate to have these skills and experiences, along with my reputation for fairness, to put to service for the Township in order to safeguard and advance its interests.

**Chatham has seen an increase in car thefts over the past year or so. Do you think the town is doing enough to combat this issue? If not, what needs to be done to better prevent these crimes?**

Based on my discussions with our Chief as well as sessions held by our Township Police, I believe the Township is employing an appropriate and robust response to combat auto thefts. As a Committee hopeful I would urge the Township to continue administering measures within our control. That is to say, locking vehicles and taking key fobs, reporting incidents to

our police and looking out for each other. Our police remains vigilant, employs ever-improving tactics/technology and continues to share information with the State and other municipalities to coordinate crime-fighting efforts. I will continue to make sure our police have the resources they need to combat crime, and I will work with our State and Federal legislators to ensure we're collectively doing all we can to address this concern.

The circumstances that have allowed for the rise in auto thefts did not occur overnight, and neither will countermeasures solve the problem overnight. It's a complex issue with many parties involved. Having said that, there is growing discourse in Trenton as the wave of thefts is widespread. I remain hopeful that it yields an improved legislative direction. Presently, our Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill has put forth a \$150MM bill which will provide much needed resources to provide law enforcement with enhanced equipment and additional staff to address these crimes.

**What accomplishments in your past would you cite as evidence that you can handle this job?**

I share with residents that I have over 20 years' experience in risk capital industries which demand professionals to be facile with analyzing, negotiating and making at-risk investment decisions on a regular basis. My track record of having developed and invested in over 350K square feet of NYC metropolitan-area real estate as well as successfully investing in US and international private companies for a \$10 billion and \$350 million investment firm over the 20-year period stands as good evidence, I think. I can also share that as a hallmark of credentialed real estate professionals is the loyalty and longevity of your investor relationships, and I'm proud to say every one of our limited partner investors continues to invest with us to this day.

**Is there anything else you would like voters to know about yourself and your positions?**

I have the good fortune to have been mentored by exceptional leaders in institutional investing. These leaders advised me of the importance of defining clear objectives, considering all viewpoints, espousing humility (because you will get it wrong many times) and critically evaluating performance/production. I believe the Township deserves this type of leadership on the Committee and nothing less.

Stacey and I have wide-ranging skills and experience, but we share a similar view on leadership for the Committee. It's why I believe we are uniquely capable of delivering a high-level of quality local governance. Much like iron sharpens iron, we can challenge one another (and others) in honest discourse, vet all options through critical thinking (egos set aside) and make decisions based on our one overarching principle – do what's the absolute best for the Township.

Stacey Ewald and Mike Choi for Township Committee.

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