

To get started, current commissioners have expressed some consternation at comments made by some Commissioner candidates, I don't believe yourself included, about whether or not the Commission as it stands is sufficiently supportive of the sheriff's office—if it gives it enough resources, if it's supportive enough of new positions, when there's questions about where the money comes from. Is there anything specific that you would support or fund differently that the Commission does now? And do you feel the current Commission does enough?

I find that interesting, because they should be working closely together. And if that's not the case, I'm curious why. I'm the type of person that wants to be collaborative with both the sheriff's department the auditor's department, local municipalities, and so I want to support as much as I can.

That's not to say that I want to just throw money at it, right. That's not how we solve things. We don't just throw money at things and hope for the best if we want to do something right. And we need to lead. We are in that leadership role as county commissioners when we get into office. And so finding ways to support our Sheriff's Department, it starts with listening to first what their concerns, comments and questions are in any way that we can. We can draw some type of solution, right? I don't like to focus on problems, I like to focus on solutions.

So if we can meet with the sheriff's department and ask them besides funding, what can we do to help you or support you? That's where it comes. That's the first step when we get an office. You know, there's ideas floating around right now and it goes back to whatever we can do to support the sheriff's department without just saying "Here's money, do what you need to do," it's more of an action step where I want to take a collaborative effort.

Do you believe that the current commissioners have been sufficiently supportive of the sheriff's office?

You know, that's a tough question to answer. I would say that there is there is some collaboration. But there could, it could always be better, right? I don't want to speak negatively of the current county commissioners, because I know they have good intentions. It's just how they go about it might be different than what I intend to structure on, right.

So do they support them? I'm sure they support them in spirit and, you know, heart and mind. But when it comes to working collaboratively and actually listening to what needs to be fixed? It's hard to comment on. I would love to say yes. I would love to say yes. But we're working on doing things differently, more effectively and better.

So I mean, well, we'll find out when we get in office, you know how collaborative they are with—I'm sure they're friends, buddy buddies, right, but I can't say if those actual supports are there.

Compared to a lot of other agencies or local governments, the county maintains a particularly robust surplus fund, rainy day account. Some agencies within the county have looked at that and said that the extent of those savings is perhaps unnecessary, that some of it should be used to support necessary agency operations, while others say that the savings are necessary to help protect the county from economic downturn. Would you dip into those savings if you were elected? And if so, what for?

Well, it depends on what the budget looks like. I'd like to focus a lot on what we're currently spending our budget on. Right? And if we need to dip into those savings to provide those services that the county needs? I would say yes. But that's with a little disclaimer at the bottom, right? We're not looking to just spend money, right.

There's this idea that Democrats just want to spend all the money that we have, and I don't believe that that's the case. You know, talking to other Democratic candidates, that's not what we're looking for. We're looking for fiscal responsibility, but there's this fine line where we want to provide those services, those community services that people are looking for, without saying, well, all your money's gone.

And so does that require dipping into the emergency fund? Hopefully not. Hopefully we can adjust budgets and move things around and really kind of go through it with a fine-tooth comb and see where we might be overspending, where we might be under-spending and where we can provide other services.

Do I believe that an emergency fund is necessary? Yes, absolutely. I do it in my personal life, emergency funds are necessary for those unknown times. However, I also believe that we need to provide more to the people of Walla Walla County.

Are there particular services where you think that current services are insufficient, when you say we need to provide more?

Yes, yes. One of the biggest ones for me is the lack of mental health support we have in this county. We're at a crisis point where the population's needs of mental health support is not being met by what we have available.

So we're looking at ways that we can provide more of those mental health services to the community, whether it be partnering with the sheriff's department to take on more mental health counselors with you know, or just bringing, having incentives for mental health counselors to come to Walla Walla so we can—not just Walla Walla, Walla Walla County, right? I want to clarify that. Because we're also talking about Burbank, Waitsburg, all these other places within the county. And so mental health is the biggest one for me.

That's why I really want to focus, our campaign is very focused on—are you familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs? So we're focused on those base needs and security. And so that security comes with mental health support. And so if we can, if we can meet those two, I believe that people in Walla Walla county, we'll be able to focus more on family. And we're big on family, we want to make sure these kids are growing up with those support systems and don't

have to focus so much on concern about, where's my next meal coming from, how am I going to keep on the lights or, or you know, everyone has anxiety these days, right, or some form of mental health concern, which is valid, they just need somewhere to go that they can get that help, and with the gas prices being so high, it's hard for people to spend that money to go, you know, 15, 20 minutes out of the way to talk to somebody where they should be able to, you know, get up in five minutes out of the way, especially how small this area is right?

Especially the people out in Burbank and Lowden and whatnot, they have to go a long way to get to get to one of those mental health counselors. So if we can put one at least in every, every municipality within the county, I think we would we would make a huge impact on those that so desperately want mental health services?

How specifically would you set up policy to implement that, to have that kind of dispersion (of resources)? What's the county's role in making that happen?

Well, the county manages the health department. Right? And so the health department would, pending what we see in the health department, whether they need more staff or more funding... I don't know, I don't know how to word this. I'm kind of losing my words right now. We're looking into it right now. Right? We're creating this team and we're trying to figure out how to get to that point.

So I guess what I'm trying to say is I don't have the answers right now. What we're doing at this phase in our campaign, where we're looking at where the needs are that the county needs, that people in the county need. And then that's what's nice about organizational leadership, which I'm very familiar with, is that we create a team of people that are qualified to work on that particular issue, and work on that solution.

So right now we're in the midst of looking at the data looking at what we can provide where we can provide. It includes funding as well. And figuring out how we can solve this lack of mental health availability crisis. And so I couldn't tell you right now off the top of my head because that plan hasn't officially gone into place. But I can tell you we're working on it and we're getting closer to a goal or meeting that goal.

To that point of identifying problems during this phase of your campaign, I'm sure it's something you've heard over and over again, is about affordable housing. What do you think that the county's role is in combating the affordable housing crisis? And overall lack of housing inventory in the county? And are there specific policies supporting the development of housing, particularly affordable housing?

Absolutely. There was, I just got it today, that there's a group coming in to talk with individuals. And I love this is happening. And I want to support it as much as possible. It's the Common Roots Housing Trust. They're coming in this Thursday, July 21, to talk about building or having great permanent, affordable housing ownership opportunities for families earning between \$28,000-\$65,000 per year. Which I support entirely.

So to answer your question, where's the county's role in that? I believe it's a huge role when it comes to a bunch of issues. Rezoning policies, and the leadership aspect of it. So going back to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, we want to focus on those bottom two. Security also includes housing. And so what we're seeing is, rents going up at an astronomical rate, taxes for homeowners going up at an astronomical rate. And then you see income not going up at the same rate. And so we see these families that were that were already struggling to keep up with rent and now having to focus more of their income towards rent.

And so you have parents stressed out beyond what they should be at any point. And so if we can find a way to collaborate closely with builders to create some form of affordable housing, some policy that could limit the increase of rent in a given period, that's ultimately what we want to do. We want to be able to ease the blow of what's happening.

And so what I can't say—once again, it comes back to building a group of individuals that don't have ulterior motives, but want to see what's best for Walla Walla County. And so those answers could come later. I wish I could give you more solid answers.

But that's kind of the enjoyment of this, is being able to focus on solutions. Because what's happening is we're seeing, if we're gonna go on the same path that we've been going, it's not going to solve anything. We're gonna see housing—we're gonna see rent go up, we're gonna see taxes go up on homeowners. And so we're trying to create a sense of less of the same. So we want to focus on those solutions for homeowners and renters, and figure out, where's the best route to limit the hurt that that's causing on individual families? Without feeling like it's intrusive government, we don't want to be an intrusive government. And that's that, I mean, it could go sideways, so quick, so it's kind of a fine dance.

And so to say, I have those answers now—I'm just one guy. I'm just one guy. To say I have answers for really any of these, like solid answers, it's probably the most arrogant thing you can say. Because it takes it takes a village, right? It takes a village to raise a baby. It takes a village to take care of a village. And so we need those community leaders more involved and that's where my strength comes in, is gathering community leaders that have the same idea of protecting families, in helping this county.

To that point about collaboration, do you believe that the county should change and modify the way that it works directly with the cities in the county to address mutual goals? Specifically, would you support creating a sort of city-county planning department or some other form of interagency board, to hold joint meetings, any other specific way of increasing that kind of collaboration?

That's a fantastic question. I'm so glad you asked that, because that is what we're working on is we're trying to be more collaborative. So, right now we're reaching out to mayors, council members. And we want to be that collaborative effort, because it's so important.

It's so important, counties and cities working together can accomplish so much. And so the one thing I keep hearing is that our current commissioners don't focus on the collaboration part with cities. And so that's my intention of coming in is to change that. And that starts now with

the campaign is asking those city leaders, what do you need to see from your county? What do you need to see to gain those supports, or feel like you are supported? What do you need to see from your county?

And the first step is picking up the phone. And so we want to have that open door policy when it comes to anybody in general, right? We want to focus on transparency, availability and accessibility. But when it comes to our local cities, we want to have that open door policy as well and work as collaboratively as we can.

Because if we don't, we're not going to get anything done. It's just going to be a whirlwind of the same old story. And we don't want the same old story. Because as nice as this place is, eventually it stops working. You can't progress without progressing. So we want to start progressing. And so yes, to answer your question, I absolutely want to be collaborative, as collaborative as possible with our cities within the county.

You said that you have been hearing a lot about this from city leaders. What have you heard as specifically being some of those points of tension? Where there needs to be more collaboration on certain issues?

Oh, well, the main thing I hear is that the county just doesn't pick up the phone, doesn't answer the emails. And I don't know why that's the case. Could it be because they're too busy? Possibly. But to me, I'm a worker. And so answering those emails, answering those phone calls, is the first and probably the most important step. Because without that, that initiation, you're not going to start, you know, flowing with these ideas and creating those, those committees that need to be created.

Sorry, I just realized that I didn't answer the second part of your question, when it comes to committees, countywide. Absolutely. But that's that collaboration, that's that organizational leadership piece I was talking about, to create committees on a county level where we can solve the mental health issue the housing issue.

Specifically with city stakeholders in these committees?

That's a good question. That's a great question. And community leaders are important. And if we have city leaders that are willing to participate without being biased towards their own city, that's something we would consider. But would we specifically seek out city leaders? I would say no. It's an open enrollment, if you will. We want those that, like I said, are focused on bettering the county and without their own personal agenda, right?

Specifically on one point of tension that I've seen between the county and the city is the Urban Growth Area. If elected, would you prioritize updating how the county works with the cities to bring new land into the UGA? I know city leaders in Walla Walla and College Place have expressed some concerns in the past that the current planning process is outdated, encourages development in unincorporated lands and freezing development within the outlying areas of the cities, which they say has contributed to an affordability

and the lack of overall development. Do you believe that these concerns have merits? And how would you address them?

So, they're very valid concerns. If it's, you know, "I don't want to see Walla Walla, the city itself, grow to this this ridiculous size," right? People love Walla Walla because it is the perfect size, it's small without being too small, it's big enough to be as wonderful as it is, right? And then that includes other cities within the county.

However, we cannot solve these, these crises that are happening without restructuring. And without that collaboration effort within the cities.

And so—sorry, could you repeat the question again?

Specifically about the way that the county works with cities to bring new land into the UGA, and then determines what should be brought in, should that process be updated?

Well, absolutely, absolutely. And as I mentioned before, it starts with picking up the phone. And so when you hear that the county is not working with the cities, and not collaborating for things like growth, then that's part of the problem. That's why we're seeing a crisis, because we're not growing at the rate we need to grow. Not saying we should grow faster than we need to. But the fact is, we have more and more people coming into this county.

And so we need to meet those demands in order to drive down the price of rent and address those housing concerns. So absolutely, we need—the biggest change is firstly collaborating with the cities within the county. And you know, as one man, it's hard to do that right by yourself. But that's a start. So we can start seeing that the cities are getting the support that the county can offer. And we can start building more affordable housing.

And I can't say that just willy-nilly building housing will make it want more affordable. That's a tricky, it's a tricky situation. Because some might say, yeah, you build all the houses, that becomes more affordable. And some might say, well, you build more houses, that's just more money for people to sell and get more money from it. Right? And so affordable housing is such a delicate dance, because we want to build enough.

Once again, like, I don't have the answers for that. But we want to make sure we hit that sweet spot where we're not we're not overdoing it, but we're also addressing those valid concerns that the citizens of the county are seeing, as well as those of local cities.

How do you envision future development on lands within the UGA? And I'm not talking about bringing new land into the UGA, but about the land already there. Do you envision any changes in the way that development happens there? There has been some frustration during annexation efforts, particularly with the city of Walla Walla, about different developmental standards between the county and the city with what, you know, city councilors will often refer to as "lower development standards," whatever that means in practice. Do you believe that the county should do anything to ease the transition from county to city land, for that land already in that UGA?

Well, if we want to see more growth, I think it's almost imperative that we make it as easy as we can. I know there are those that want to see the cities grow, and it's going to happen, right, there's no way that you can force cities not to grow, especially when you have a population that's increasing.

And so the county transitioning some of that land to those different cities, it's going to be a slow process. But at the county level, we can at least attempt to make it as easy as possible. And you know that that comes with rezoning for annexation, as you mentioned, and in creating more opportunities for those investors to come in and increase that affordable housing that that needs to be built.

What are specific steps you take to support the creation of new businesses in the county and the retention of existing ones?

Great question. Supporting our local businesses is so important. And I can't stress that enough.

A lot of it is talking to local business owners, a lot of it has to do with the amount of taxes that are being brought on to these smaller businesses. And so that kind of goes back to that point you made about the emergency fund, some might say it's a little too big, and that we're not we're not using it for services, right. And so if we can lower those taxes for local businesses, where we can, we should look at it.

The only thing I can think of is that business is important to the local cities, the county, you know, it's, at the risk of sounding like an average politician, it's the life blood, you know, it's where the revenue comes in. And so we want to see other businesses come in, you know.

Everyone talks about wanting to Costco and so that would be amazing to come in. And that's, not that's not the goal of coming in the county commission. I'm not trying to bring in Costco and all this stuff. But you know, I wouldn't scoff though if a developer for Costco wanted to bring that in.

Sorry, I feel like I'm talking about Costco too much. It's just I that's what I hear about when people want big businesses here, Costco is the number one thing. Especially with gas prices, like, you don't want to drive an hour to the Tri-Cities, and then have to drive an hour back and you just wasted half your tank, which now adds what, for some people \$50, \$75, just to make sure the toilet paper is stocked. So giving that option to people here would be amazing.

But it's not just big businesses that we want to bring, though they do bring a good bit of tax revenue to the county into local cities. But we want to encourage more smaller businesses to open up. That's the beauty of Walla Walla County, is it's so abundant with small businesses. And we don't want to saturate the market, but we do want to have those other offerings that that the people of the county are looking for.

And so if we can bring in a couple big, bigger businesses to add on to that those, that tax revenue for the county, so we can provide more goods and services and more services for the people, that's something that we also want to work on as well.

But like I said, we also want to support small business and encourage others to bring in small business to our area. So hopefully that answered your question.

What's a hard-won lesson, something that you have gained through having to navigate some difficulty, overcoming an obstacle, acknowledging a mistake, that influences the way that you will approach this office?

Well, actually at the beginning of this campaign, the biggest lesson I learned is: be yourself. Stop trying to be somebody else.

I started off this campaign thinking that I could I could emulate other politicians and then I quickly learned that I'm not a politician. I'm just some guy that wants to do good in the county, that wants to give back to the county that has embraced my family and myself with arms wide open. So we want to, I personally wanted to take it upon myself to be that person that can make those changes within the county for the better.

So that's the biggest lesson I learned in recent history is just don't be somebody else. Be yourself and focus on what's important to you. Because that will resonate with with people with accounting.

How did you learn that lesson? What was what was the moment when you realized that?

It was a speech early on. I went to a day of action where we go out and we ask people to sign up to vote because we want people to exercise their democratic right to vote, right. And so, they asked me to get up there and give a speech and where I thought in my mind, okay, I know what I'm gonna say, what would a politician, how would how would they address this? How would they talk in front of these people?

And I don't really have issues talking in front of a crowd of people, once I know what I want to say in my mind, right. But this time, I was so focused on "what do I need to say," instead of "what do I feel in my heart?" As a county commissioner candidate, what do I feel, because that's what we're focused on, is the compassion, the heart and the love of this place. That's what we want to reciprocate back.

And so I got up there, I was talking to a group of maybe about 20, 25 people. And the first word that came out was (mumbling). Literally, that's all that came out. So I thought about it for a second. I was like, "What am I gonna say?" And just a bunch of images and ideas started spewing out my head. And so I couldn't speak to save my life. It just came out as words, random words, random sounds, and then eventually, I had to say, "I'm so sorry, I never speak like this, you know, go to votehaid.com," or something like that, right.

And I took that home, and I sat on that for, for days, I was like, what happened? This isn't gonna go well, that's how I'm going to speak in front of crowds, right. And so I thought about it for a while, and it hit me, I was trying to be somebody else I was trying to emulate politicians you see on TV, or what my idea of what a candidate should be. And that that did not go over well. And so from that point on, I made the decision that I need to be myself, I need to be my genuine, authentic self, because it's not fair to voters if I get voted into office, and all of a sudden I'm become somebody else that they didn't vote for.

And, you know, honestly, it's one of the biggest lessons I've learned so far is that you can't you can't fake being a candidate or just a good person, you have to try to be your best self. Right. And, like, that's, that's where that compassion and love came from, as we're trying to, we're trying to spread positivity, because I'm generally a positive person. And I want to see the best in people, I like to go out there and make people laugh, make them smile. Right?

And so I want to do that on a county-level, by providing those much needed services and that availability, accessibility so people know who their county commissioner is. And so, to answer your question, it's being myself, this is the biggest lesson I learned.

We saved for the last, every candidate is getting a hardball question about their record. To that point, you don't have much of a record as an public official to talk about, because of your disqualification from the College Place City Council. County government is incredibly complicated and making a mistake on piece of paperwork, or, you know, some small minutiae and the day-to-day operations of the county, can have really drastic consequences. How do you reassure voters that that you will be attentive to those details and that you won't make significant mistakes given the overlooking of your new address?

Understandable, understandable. Yeah, I own up to it. I own up to it. It was 10 feet. I should have should have been a little bit more diligent when it came to that.

But I almost attribute that to divine intervention in a way, right? I'm not saying I'm the chosen one by God Himself, right. But in a way I see it as divine intervention because of that. If that didn't happen, I wouldn't have this opportunity to run for county commissioner and even have more of a positive impact on the county, right?

So how do I address that? It's as simple as surrounding yourself with the right kind of people. You know, I mentioned earlier, to say I'm the one person that has all the ideas is the most arrogant thing that I could possibly say. I'm not, I'm not.

What I am is a person that can gather others and gather other leaders and proofreaders and fact checkers if you will, to ensure that that we're running things the right way. As a person, as a man, I make mistakes, we all make mistakes, right? You can't go out there and say, "I've never made a mistake in my life." That's not owning up to it. I own up to as many mistakes as I'm aware of.

And so surrounding myself with those individuals that are qualified, that are, that are attentive, you know, and working on myself personally, to be more attentive, to be more well read or to educate myself, you know, I'm always educating myself. I'm a perpetual student, if you will, is

what I consider myself. And I like to take classes outside of, you know, I just take classes from the community college or the university if I get a chance. It's about consistently bettering myself.

And so, to reassure the voters, it's a combination of being more educated, never taking that for granted, and striving to learn more and to understand more, as well as having those individuals surrounding me that have the same mentality of being more attentive and focused. And that's the way we get things done is, once again, coming back to collaboration, not just with local governments, but with people in general. Having a properly staffed county that can that can do what's right and the most for the people of the county.