

Thurston County Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire – David Gaw

Bio: I am a long-time Olympia resident of over 30 years, a disabled veteran, an advocate for addressing our climate crisis, a youth soccer coach, a supporter of occupational safety and health laws, a quality and professional public servant of over 20 years and a father, son, brother, uncle, cousin and nephew. I have worked for Perpetual Motion (Mark Grindstaff now of Grindstaff Trophies), WSU Energy Program (former state energy office, under LD27's Representative Jake Fey), Olympia/Tumwater/North Thurston School Districts (as a soccer coach), Department of Commerce (for Tony Usibelli, former Energy Policy Director), the Public Utility District No. 1 of Cowlitz County (as the Energy Efficiency Manager), Blackhills Football Club (as a soccer coach), the Employment Security Department (as a benefits specialist), and the Department of Labor and Industries (as an analyst and project manager). I bring the administrative, legal, community, environmental, public health/safety experience and the enthusiasm as a collaborative leader who will uphold the perspectives of residents and businesses in Thurston County.

I hope to fulfill my purpose in this role and hope you can see the value in selecting and supporting me during this process.

1. What skills and experience do you bring to this office?

I bring over two decades of quality and applicable skills and experiences that include investigative and market research; technical competency covering building science, climate change and energy; occupational safety and health; policy and regulatory processes and frameworks; program, project and change management; and a sustained focus on effective and collaborative leadership.

Additional details can be found on my LinkedIn profile at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/davidigaw>.

2. What is your vision for Thurston county?

My vision for Thurston county puts our community first. A community where differences are put aside and a collective voice is heard, which enables a sustainable approach to build a vibrant and engaged group of businesses and residences in our county.

3. What do you consider to be the most pressing issues facing the county in the next few years? How would you address these issues?

The most pressing issues are my key focus areas and are incorporated in addressing our largest crisis: climate change. Affordable housing, public health and safety, operational efficiency, and serving our community are the key issues I see as having priority in our community, while addressing climate change.

With these as my key issues during this election/endorsement process, the first concern I will address, if elected, is dealing with the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and developing better strategies to

incorporate into our next level of preparedness. This is under the assumption that we have containment and have begun the recovery process. If not, I would focus on how we, as a community, can expedite our efforts to get us to containment and move us forward to normalizing our new way of life.

The focus on the pandemic and examination of our efforts, both successes and failures, puts us in an ideal path to leverage this experience and apply, where applicable, the bigger challenge that is in front of us: climate change.

While addressing the key issues is complex as each one is intertwined with the others in some way, this will require a thoughtful approach through collaboration.

This will involve having internal staff, external stakeholders and other expert insights/research to help us develop the necessary changes for programs and services that will meet our community needs now and in the future.

4. What are your county budget priorities?

Operational efficiency/efficacy to include streamlined processes and improved systems that address customer feedback and innovations for modernization, as well as program re-visioning or benefits evaluation is the key component I believe should drive how we are spending the County's money. This component is key in addressing where our deficiencies are and what we can improve on relative to our operations. This approach will enable us to see what opportunities exist relative to cost savings and may also allow our programs and services to be framed in a way that looks at value to the community from a cost-benefit perspective.

From a budgetary perspective, I will need more information than what currently is available to the public and this will require looking through our programs and services through the lens of both the employees and customers.

Many things will have happened and will impact our ability to move forward after this pandemic, and it is my hope that we can move forward in a manner that strategically aligns with my vision and addresses the issues I believe our community needs to focus on.

5. The rainy-day fund has been greatly diminished. How would you go about addressing this?

I look at this as reserves for the county that can be used for emergencies, in such situations as we are in now. These funds are often used to mitigate the risk associated with unknown or known potential impacts to our services and programs. From an operations, programs and services perspective, our planning should always include this factor and should be evaluated on this factor relative to our successful implementation of and outcomes or benefits provided. Are these services executed in a manner

that has addressed and mitigated the risks or do these services continue to encumber and take on more risk?

We need to have a more accountable directive to assure we can meet risks in the future and at the same time maintain our economic viability for the community and our financial stakeholders (i.e. bonds/bond rating).

Many of my responses herein are aligned with the priorities I want to lead with and my issues, if addressed strategically, brings our community to a place that allows us to alleviate our financial risk.

6. What is your plan for the growing problem of homelessness in Thurston county?

This, too, is not just a local problem, but another national and global concern. Our attempts to find solutions that can be agreed upon have led to local differences on approaches and are not getting us results. Basic needs and services must be provided to those who are in these situations and we as a community must take this issue on collaboratively.

Looking at the psychology of oneself and applying Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs aligns with many "housing first" programs that are in place and showing successes. These are often paired with subsidies and services that can address financial planning, job/work-related support, and mental health and medical care. These are the basic needs that provide the pathway to being engaged and intertwined with the community and society as contributors and citizens.

We have such a rich history of innovation that can support this approach through technology, community collaboration and partnerships that can make housing a priority to address the challenges people have with such an impactful transition. This is an area I hope to focus on most, as it will prioritize people, our community and a healthy environment that we all need.

7. What is your position on County policies where growth and the environment seem opposed?

My position is that we find ways to create better alignment for sustainable growth that addresses the climate crisis, resource capacity and infrastructure efficiencies. With growth and the policies that provide guidance, information and data on resource constraints (i.e. water, environment) as well as our expertise around infrastructure should help provide the necessary direction for sustainable growth. Our policies need to shift towards healthy, quality AND sustainable growth that looks long-term at resources and the impacts of development...not just the revenue or cost-recovery aspect.

I am currently influencing our development and building policies and practices

as a Board Member for the Thurston Climate Action Team (TCAT) and am supporting our local building action team. This team has partnered with the Northwest EcoBuilding Guild's South Sound Chapter and is aimed at communicating to and educating our community stakeholders to evaluate and adopt policies that support the Thurston Regional Planning Council's Climate Mitigation Plan.

8. What is your position on the Rocky Prairie Development Logistics Center?

I believe this to be a concerning project that is likely to impact the local environment and the surrounding community.

The impacts on developing in this environment, much like my position where a conflict arises where developing in a sensitive area or one that could severely impact its surroundings and resources, should be avoided. Our efforts should focus on a strategic approach that incorporates a zero-carbon mindset and aligns our infrastructure and services to existing programs that also leverages what we have or are working to sustainably develop.

From the information that I have read, we need to prevent such a development from occurring.

9. The County Commissioners sit as a quasi-judicial body. What background do you have you for making decisions of a legal nature?

I have experience working with federal, state, and local contracts; federal, state and local policy and regulatory mandates; Washington state rulemaking processes and the Administrative Procedures Act; and have made legal corrections to contracts as well as utilized, provided guidance to/on and interpreted laws for the justification of programs, projects and services nationally and locally.

10. What is your position on the current system of cash bail.

Having this vehicle available and with our judicial system and staff in place to make cognizant decisions that align with statute and precedence, I don't see there being an issue or concern. Relative to bonds, where a portion of the bail is provided by the individual can address the nature of being able to afford bail and the release from jail. In instances of those challenges where being able to pay the percentage of or full bail amount, there should be factors that bring in history, nature of crime, individual behavior and finances that calculate a lower bail amount beyond the norm.

Having gone through this process many years ago, if one were in the position of not being able to afford bail, bond or otherwise, under their current circumstances, I would find the discrepancy in a judge's or court's ability to

make course corrections. My perspective on those who can afford and who cannot, simply comes down to an imbalance in the law weighing towards those who have enough money, which is often unfair for those who do not.

11. Did you support the proposal to move the county courthouse to downtown Olympia?

I find that we need a safer and more modern facility to manage to change and keep our community safe but am concerned with the impacts of costs and burden to taxpayers.

I grew up here and would go with my father to the courthouse as he worked on the computer mainframe systems for the Sheriff's office. I went to the health department when I was 16 to get my food handler's permit...getting ready for my first "corporate" job at the West Olympia McDonald's. Having gone to the County Commissioner's meeting, visited to get information on filing processes, and participated in Thurston County Democrat and our Legislative District 22's meetings, I have realized that everything is still the same. Same feel, same structure, same smell...for nearly three decades (from my perspective). I know there have been security enhancements and other upgrades to the buildings since the mid-1970's beginning, but perhaps it could be of value to explore the benefits.

I did not place a position on this matter prior to my commitment to support our community but find that my other focus areas are leveraged with the opportunity to bring in a modern facility while offsetting other potential opportunities that could have cost savings.

Additionally, the economic viability relative to current costs now, the leveraging with the City of Olympia and the location could bring long term cost savings that would benefit taxpayers sooner than managing the larger burden of costs to repair and operate both aging and inefficient systems and infrastructure.

With a healthier economic environment prior to the pandemic, I would have supported such a measure as the burden of this cost has longer and more sustained benefits and value to the community.

Should this go forward in the future, and if elected as your Commissioner, a thoughtful, sustainable and strategic approach on what this building looks like AND what we can do to reduce taxpayer burden would be my focus, especially when we will likely be in the midst of an economic recovery.

12. What are your thoughts on immigration and federal enforcement of deportation of undocumented immigrants within Thurston County?

Our community needs to be safe. Our citizens, our friends, our families, our colleagues, our services, our businesses and our county need to be safe from raucous and inappropriate federal policies that de-humanize immigrants and those who are trying to transition and/or work in the United

States. This de-humanizing of individuals has brought back racism and discrimination setting us back to the mindset of our early/mid-20th century. This is not okay. There is a vast disconnect with effective immigration reform and our current administration's interpretation and application of, which is extremely disappointing and frightening. There is a common pathway that gets us to a place that allows for transition and movement without a fear-based, inhumane practice of deportation.

13. Mental health services are currently inadequate to address mental health issues in Thurston County. What do you recommend to solve this problem?

First, examining and identifying some of the root causes that have created this problem. Is it underfunding, lack of collaboration, inability to engage with these individuals, location and accessibility of services, too many variables to address, differences in approaches/techniques or is it bigger and more systemic? I believe we have opportunities to address this issue and with a collaborative approach, our efforts to address this issue can only lead us to a solution that may work.

We have some information on elements of the cause, but we are lacking the programs and services that encourage support to engage and participate to get care. A focus on looking at basic needs and establishing a safe space or temporary home may reach a group or demographic of people impacted by mental health issues, as this is a common human factor that supports esteem building and establishes a safe environment to seek help.

14. Do support an initiative to provide public power to Thurston County?

Yes. Having worked at a public utility in Cowlitz County, I see significant value and benefits to the community. However, I would design, develop, implement and lead it much differently than the other public utilities in the Pacific Northwest.

The candidate assumes full responsibility for all answers to this questionnaire. Your responses to this questionnaire should be considered public knowledge as we cannot assure confidentiality when making the questionnaire available to our membership.