

# Thurston County Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire

(Michael Steadman)

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

*I have a wide range of experience to bring to the office of Thurston County Commissioner. First, my experience as a Lacey City Council member gives me the unique required ability to analyze and make good decisions on bid contracts that are building the future of our county. Secondly, I am a small business owner. My goal in this role is to provide local entrepreneurs opportunities that may not otherwise have to open a small business and contribute to our local economy. Thirdly, I am a Marine and understand the value in measured and responsible leadership. Integrity and a steady hand are two of my greatest assets when it comes to leadership, and I understand that we are only as well off as the least of us. Finally, I have been and am still a member of the sheet metal workers union. My time on the ground floor of this industry helps me understand the value that organized labor brings to the table and to share their passion for workers rights and quality of work.*

2. What is your vision for Thurston county?

*Thurston County will continue to see an influx of population that is unprecedented. The simple fact is that this is a growing community and people want to move here. Former military and people from around the states want to raise their families here. What I envision is a county government that makes decisions with everyone's needs in mind. I practice the three "I's," Innovation, Infrastructure, and Inclusion. We need the innovation to build a community that is suitable for the middle-class while also considering the environment, public safety, and economic sustainability. The infrastructure we build must be built with these considerations as well as be financially smart and sustainable by bringing the voices of labor and minority populations to the table. We must practice this inclusion in all aspects of the vision we share for 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?

*Infrastructure. As I stated, the population growth of Thurston County is not slowing any time soon. As such, we need to invest in housing, transit, and services that can support this growth.*

4. What are your county budget priorities?

*Infrastructure, education, and Public Safety. Specifically, our legal services need the infrastructure to support the growth we are facing whether it be the courts or fire and first responder services. Our education system must be properly funded, not only because it is mandated but it is the right thing to do to improve our county's future. And, we also must make services accessible to the people that need them the most.*

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

*It is going to take some time and some smart investments to replenish our "Rainy Day Fund." Unfortunately, the anti-tax/anti-progress crowd that my current opponent is a part of has no interest in investing in our community or moving it forward. Any attempts to shore up our protections for say something like the current coronavirus crisis are going to be met with the narrative that it is just another tax. As we currently see, we can't afford to be the "party of no." In times of need, people should be able to depend on the proper services being there and being funded. We must start changing the narrative. We need to ask our communities at both the city and county levels to invest in preparedness for times like these. This includes our local businesses, and ultimately our local residents. We also must protect this investment from misuse by commissioners or others who would drain these dedicated funds for other projects that do not meet the definition of a "rainy day."*

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

*Homelessness isn't relegated to a specific place or a specific time in our history. People fall on hard times, become unstable, and look for a way out. Thereby, the problem persists and has many complex facets. What we need is cooperation between governments at the city, county, and state levels, and a commitment to properly fund human services. This must be coupled with a "housing first" approach. Reliable shelter, even transitional, is proven to improve the chances of those that seek help and want to get back on their feet. We need mental health professionals on the job at clinics and in community engagement situations with law enforcement. We need addiction specialists on the job at regionally funded clinics. We need officers on the police force properly trained to practice diversion and do no harm. We also need to invest in a variety of types of housing and shelters. The community must also be on board with this. Most of all, we need to address this problem with the care and compassion that we would if our own family was in this situation, because in the end houseless are human beings and nobody is immune to this problem.*

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

*First, let me be clear that climate change is an existential threat to our existence. That being said, we also must provide opportunities within our community for local business to grow and for others to come here and become part of our community. That means we need to build enough housing to handle the growth in population and enough office/industrial/warehouse/business space for everyone to thrive in our local economy. In my experience, I do not see this as opposed to the environment. I am on the City of Lacey Council, and we have been consistently one of the most awarded cities in America for our work on environmentally friendly projects. I will bring this tradition to the county by practicing the three "I's." We can use the **Innovation** of our newest and most green technologies to build **Infrastructure** that is smart and sustainable for the future and practice awareness when it comes to the **Inclusion** of all voices impacted by this growth.*

8. What is your position on the Rocky Prairie Development Logistics Center?  
*As most are aware, there are several "industrial" designated spaces in Tumwater that belong to the Port of Olympia. I believe we have the room for growth and innovation in those areas, and I will work with the Port of Olympia to ensure smart and environmentally friendly planning for those areas. I do not see the need to damage the beautiful green spaces in Rocky Prairie.*
9. The County Commissioners sit as a quasi-judicial body. What background do you have you for making decisions of a legal nature?  
*I am a City Council Member for the City of Lacey, a smaller but similar quasi-judicial body.*
10. What is your position on the current system of cash bail.  
*Cash bail negatively affects the most vulnerable populations. I am a strong believer in the Constitution of the United States, and in my understanding, you cannot hold someone for an indefinite amount of time for being unable to pay a fine. I would be in favor of eliminating cash bail for another, more equitable, solution.*
11. Did you support the proposal to move the county courthouse to downtown Olympia?  
*I support a new courthouse. I will leave the location up to surveyors and experts, but downtown Olympia may be in danger of flooding due to sea level rise in many areas. So, we must keep that in mind and make both a logical and financially aware decision.*
12. What are your thoughts on immigration and federal enforcement of deportation of undocumented immigrants within Thurston County?  
*I understand that the federal government has a job to do. However, that job should not be tearing apart families and generally harassing people that otherwise pose no threat to our community. The majority of immigrants, both legal and undocumented, come here to seek a better life and take care of their families. This is what immigrants have done throughout the history of this country. Also, our county has a job to do as well. Part of that job is to protect the members of our community. What should not be happening is the federal government asking our county officials to go above and beyond that job, because they have a quota to meet. I am in favor of the federal government deportation of violent criminals, but I am not in favor of putting good people in a bad situation because they made a minor mistake.*
13. Mental health services are currently inadequate to address mental health issues in Thurston County. What do you recommend to solve this problem?  
*This nation has been cutting funding for mental health services for decades at federal and local levels. It is time to rethink this trend. It may take moving our budget priorities, but these services need to be fully funded.*
14. Do you support an initiative to provide public power to Thurston County?

*I do not believe that at this time it would be financially responsible to make this switch. For me, it comes down to investing in the community. If the decision is between leasing equipment and infrastructure and PSE investing in the community and diverse solutions, then I would support the latter. The problem with leasing the equipment is it hurts the rate payers the most. Especially, those who are in more economically stressed situations. The alternate solution is to hold PSE accountable to their plans to diversify. Set regulatory guidelines that a percentage of their sources for energy must produce clean energy, and eventually (soon) require that percentage to be the majority.*

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.