

County Commissioner Candidate Questions

Question 1: What suggestions do you have for the complaints about the landfill as to odor, rain runoff, how it looks in general?

Answer: My first thought is and has always been we need to “Dump the Dump.” Until convinced otherwise I believe we will pay dearly in the future with health, environmental, and financial issues. The 1.2 million or so dollars we collect annually from the contractor is no reason to jeopardize the health and eco system of our county. I have kept up with the counties efforts to address the problems with odor, rain runoff, and the aesthetics but I am like all the other citizens of this county, we are in the dark because what the county is doing has not been communicated with us and believe nothing will be done to terminate or not renew the contract. If elected I will review the contract and let everyone know where we stand.

Question 2: What is your educational background that qualifies you for the position?

Answer: I have a Masters in Technology Management from Southern Polytechnic University. This degree was created by the university to educate engineers who were being put into management positions in the late 80's and early 90's to help them understand the business side of an organization. I understand a degree does not qualify anyone for a certain position but I do understand how hard work and determination adds to the equation. I worked two jobs and was in the Air Force Reserves and paid my own way. This degree open doors to management positions I held after getting the degree and I was always able to meet and exceed all expectations.

Question 3: Please identify at least 3 goals you plan to focus on, and how you would measure if these goals are achieved.

Answer: Goal 1. Improve the efficiency and response of Public Safety to include full-time fire and emergency services. We need our citizens to feel safe and confident. I would use measured data and trends charts to work closely with all Police Chiefs toward this goal. In the case of full-time Fire and Emergency Services, it would be having these position in place and serving the community measured in response times and lower insurance bills. This is long overdue and we need to move aggressively forward and stop talking about it.

Goal 2: Using SPLOST monies for their intended purposes maintain roads and bridges on a more regular basis.

Goal 3: Using SPLOST to build an Agricultural and Educational Center to support our county's number one industry and help promote economic development. Recent studies show it would bring in hundreds of visitors and stimulate our local economies.

Question 4: What are the 3 most pressing issues facing Polk County and how would you propose a solution or corrective action to be undertaken?

Answer: Right now and for the next several months it is COVID 19. The solution is going to take some time before a vaccine or cure is developed - both out of our control. In the mean time we all need to use common sense by taking all the safety precautions put forth by the medical community. We need to get back to work, but that does not mean you should act like you did before the virus hit.

Second: Drugs... when 40% of the cases the district attorney prosecutes are drug cases and 70 - 80% are indirectly related to the use of them such as robberies, thefts, and assaults a more aggressive approach needs to take place using the legal, healthcare, education, and mental health organizations.

Third: Landfill...we discussed this earlier but I believe the solution is in the contract.

Question 5: Do you feel that starting salaries for county employees are sufficient to continue to recruit people to fill vacant positions?

Answer: The studies done during the last two years adjusted the salaries of all county employees according to surrounding counties and I believe they were accurate figures; however, I feel our police and fire are still underpaid.

Question 6: What is your assessment of the financial health of the county?

Answer: Based on all the audit reports I have reviewed over the last several years, the county is in very good financial health. I believe the 2018 report showed we had a 9 to 1 assets over debit ratio and investment income went up 136% which show we have money to invest. However we will face challenges in the near future due to the financial impact of Covid-19 which will require careful management.

Question 7: Is the establishment of a paid fire department for unincorporated Polk County a priority for you and will you work to make that happen during your term as commissioner?

Answer: My number one goal as shown in question 3 includes a full time fire and emergency service department. I have to make it work in my first term because there are no guarantees of a second term. I will ensure it is done correctly and in a way that will not burden the tax payer. I have 40 years' experience in fire management at Dobbins, Lockheed and later as the Fire Chief for the 2nd Air Force covering bases in the Eastern United States along with an associate degree in Fire Science and a bachelor in Fire Science Administration.

Question 8: What do you think are the positive efforts made and the areas for improvement in our efforts to promote economic development in our county? How do we enhance our efforts to promote tourism and commercial retail growth in our downtown?

Answer: Positives... Tractor Supply, Home Depot, Walmart, Jefferson Southern, the cold storage plant and the latest addition of the heavy equipment training school are a few that come to mind. However, I would like to attract high technology companies with a low carbon footprint that would not demand a lot of resources. The Agricultural Educational Center we have been discussing for over two years would enhance tourism and bring growth to our downtown areas. The feasibility study from UGA shows a positive economic impact of 100,000 visitors with \$750,000 being spent in the local community. One of the best known agritourist farms in Georgia is in Polk County. Since agriculture is our number one industry, why not build off our natural resources and the approximately 500 local farms in the county.