

Position 5 Sonya Fischer

OPB: One priority I'm seeing from most of the county commission candidates is to lower costs or increase affordability. Given that there are so many outside factors that influence the economy and cost of living, what will you as a commissioner do to keep costs down for Clackamas County residents?

Fischer: With Donald Trump in the White House, prices for everything from gasoline to eggs are surging sky high. As a commissioner, I'll do everything in my power to rein in the cost of living for Clackamas County residents.

I'll keep transportation costs down for commuters and families by opposing tolls or gas taxes. I'll address out-of-control utility bills by exploring public/private partnerships to expand renewable energy sources, and I'll make sure to eliminate waste in the county budget so that we're able to appropriately fund programs like weatherization assistance so families stay warm in the winter months.

I'll cut red-tape and speed up the permitting process so we can build more types of housing at every price point. And I'll make sure that the people working to construct public projects, like our recently finished courthouse and new libraries which I helped create as a commissioner, or other new buildings and roads built with public dollars, are paid good wages with good benefits so that they can afford to see a doctor and keep food on the table for their families. We have to use public dollars for the public good.

OPB: In addition to affordability, several of you have listed public safety and "fully funding CCSO" among your priorities. The county's ambulance service provider, AMR, has historically failed to meet response time goals. The contract the county signed with AMR last summer also included a huge price increase for patients. How do you balance improved response times while also prioritizing affordability?

It's deeply concerning that Clackamas county residents are paying more than anyone else in the tri-county area for an ambulance ride, [under the new contract approved by Ben West](#). \$72.90 per mile for an ambulance ride? That's ludicrous. My approach to AMR will be the same as my approach to any other service the county contracts out: Renewal of the contract has to be tied to metrics and proven results. We need a clear measuring stick to hold them accountable to assuring response times are met when people need emergency care. Taxpayers don't deserve politicians who settle for less.

I'll work to make sure we have adequate funds in the Compassionate Care Program in Clackamas County to help families bear this increased cost burden. With over 22,000 rides a year and a compassionate fund of only \$150,000, there aren't enough resources to help those in need – not to mention the red tape that working families and seniors have to go through just to access the financial assistance. I have heard from

seniors on fixed incomes who say that if they have a health emergency, they won't call for an ambulance because they can't afford it. That is not ok. These decisions are not abstract and we have to look at their real impact on real people. Ben West failed to assure that these cost increases won't cause real harm

OPB: As for CCSO, the county discovered some questionable financial management within the sheriff's office last year. For those that say they want to "fully fund CCSO" can you clarify, is CCSO not currently fully funded or has that been the case previously? How would you fund the office while ensuring sound financial management and fiscal responsibility?

3 and ½ years ago, the sheriff's office was fully funded. Today, they are operating at a deficit of 45 positions that they can't fill due to their budget. That includes vacancies from deputies, to detectives, to parole officers, and everything in between, who each play an important role in keeping our community safe.

The commission passed an insufficient budget. And when that issue came to light, there has been no urgency or creativity to fix the shortfall. That will mean cuts, layoffs, and insufficient public safety services. There needs to be more accountability so that Clackamas County taxpayers are getting the high quality public services that they are paying for and deserve.

OPB: Some candidates are saying the county needs to build more homes to lower housing costs and help end unsheltered homelessness. What are your strategies for achieving this? In what ways does protection of rural parts of the county factor into this goal? If you feel building more homes is the wrong solution, what do you propose for lowering housing costs and ending unsheltered homelessness?

To bring costs down and help solve unsheltered homelessness, we absolutely must build more homes that are accessible at every income level. We have enough places within the urban growth boundary to expand, without jeopardizing our rural agricultural communities or chipping away at the natural spaces that make Clackamas County special. Building homes closer to urban centers also means those homes will be closer to services, like public transit and trash pickup, and less likely to be in fireprone areas when the next megafire hits.

As a commissioner, I'll develop and pass new incentives to make sure developers don't face barriers to building affordable homes. It's a proven tactic that has worked in the past and needs to be revisited, thoughtfully and creatively, in today's climate. We still have a shortage of homes that everyday people can afford, but we also are seeing the industry crater due to lack of investment from the feds and a slight cooling of the housing market.

OPB: In the past year some Oregon counties have firmly stated their status as a sanctuary jurisdiction and stated their agencies will not cooperate with federal immigration enforcement without a judicial warrant. Is this a stance you think Clackamas County should take? Why or why not?

Oregon law is settled – Local law enforcement cannot aid federal immigration enforcement without a warrant. As long as I'm on the Clackamas County Commission I'll uphold this common sense, long-settled law that assures that our local resources do not assist ICE agents. It is disingenuous to say that any county is a "sanctuary county" giving the illusion that Federal immigration will not be present. While Clackamas County cannot prevent ICE from being in our community, our local government resources will not aid them in the immigration efforts.

Ben West has opposed this common-sense policy, calling it "extreme" and taking steps to undermine it so that Clackamas County sheriffs deputies would have to use our local resources and tax dollars to support federal immigration. That's disappointing, because our local public safety tax dollars are already stretched thin and should be focused on solving local problems.

Everyone, whether they were born here or not, deserves to be able to go to work or visit a hospital when they are sick. They should feel safe reporting to law enforcement when they are a victim or witness to a crime. And they should be able to take their kids to school, go to church, or visit a public building without fear that they will be whisked away by masked lawless federal agents. Unfortunately, with the aggressive Trump administration policies, families do not feel safe. Local government is there to support families not facilitate actions that create fear and instability.