

Position 4

Robert Kukish

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?

Kukish: As a county commissioner, I would focus on the areas where county government can make a real difference in everyday costs for residents. That includes improving permitting timelines and making development processes more predictable so housing can be built more efficiently and affordably. I also support exploring policy options that discourage or prevent large-scale purchases of single-family homes by LLCs and institutional investors so more homes remain available to local residents and first-time buyers.

Supporting locally rooted small businesses helps keep investment circulating within our communities and strengthens long-term economic stability. I would also prioritize responsible budgeting by treating every public dollar as an investment with clear expectations for results and accountability. Maintaining reliable infrastructure, coordinating behavioral health services effectively, and supporting public safety are essential to keeping Clackamas County affordable and stable for residents.

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?

Ambulance response times in Clackamas County have been affected by several factors, including regional shortages of EMTs and paramedics, increased call volume, and the challenges of covering a large county that includes both urban and rural areas. So this isn't just a provider issue—it's a system issue.

As commissioner, my role would be to make sure the county sets clear performance expectations, tracks response times transparently, and holds providers accountable while also examining creative initiatives to help strengthen the EMS workforce and increase AMR staffing levels over time.

Affordability also has to remain part of the conversation. Residents need timely emergency care, but they also need protection from unnecessary cost increases. That means improving coordination between ambulance providers and fire agencies, reviewing contract performance carefully, and making sure we're using resources efficiently so response times improve without shifting the burden onto patients.

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?

When people talk about “fully funding” the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office, it's important to clarify what that means. CCSO is funded through a combination of the county general fund and the public safety levy. The real question is whether those resources are aligned with staffing needs, service expectations, and strong financial oversight.

Last year's concerns about financial management show why accountability must go hand in hand with funding. Supporting public safety means making sure funds are transparent, traceable, and tied to clearly defined outcomes residents can understand.

It also means placing firm limits on the use of surveillance technology and ensuring contracts include protections that prevent policy changes if vendors change ownership or are absorbed by larger companies. Residents deserve both effective law enforcement services and confidence that their privacy and public dollars are being protected responsibly.

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?

Building more housing is part of the solution, but it has to be the right housing in the right places, coordinated with infrastructure, services, and protections for rural communities. Increasing supply alone won't solve affordability or unsheltered homelessness if homes aren't accessible to the people who live and work here.

As commissioner, I would support streamlining permitting, improving coordination with cities, encouraging workforce housing near employment areas, and expanding pathways for first-time buyers, veterans, and first responders. I also support exploring limits on bulk purchases of single-family homes by large institutional investors so more homes remain available to residents.

Protecting rural areas remains essential. Rural lands support agriculture, natural resources, wildfire resilience, and the character of Clackamas County. Housing solutions should focus primarily on urban and unincorporated growth areas where services already exist.

Addressing unsheltered homelessness also requires prevention—behavioral health coordination, domestic-violence rehousing support, employment access, and earlier family stabilization efforts—so fewer people fall into homelessness in the first place.

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 already has long-standing statewide law limiting the use of local resources for federal immigration enforcement without a judicial warrant. I believe Clackamas County should continue operating consistently with state law while maintaining clear expectations about how local agencies interact with federal authorities.

Local law enforcement works best when residents trust that they can report crimes, cooperate with investigations, and seek help without fear. Maintaining that trust strengthens public safety for everyone. It is also important that county policies respect constitutional rights and maintain the right to due process. Clear standards—such as requiring a judicial warrant before local involvement in federal immigration enforcement—help ensure those protections are consistently upheld.

I also strongly support the role of states in setting their own public safety policies without unnecessary federal pressure or interference when those policies are consistent with constitutional protections and the rule of law. My priority is making sure county policies support community trust, protect constitutional rights, and allow local agencies to stay focused on their primary responsibility: serving the safety and well-being of all residents.