

District 4

Anthony Martin

OPB: Is Washington County currently striking the right balance between protecting rural areas and farm land and allowing development for economic growth and housing construction? Are there ways you think the county should adjust that balance?

I don't believe that Washington County is currently striking the right balance between protecting rural areas and farmland while allowing development for economic growth and housing. I believe that we need to look at every land use decision as a microcosm to the larger picture of sustainability of our environment, economy, and livability. Right now, it's too expensive to plan a future here. Housing costs are skyrocketing and economic prospects are diminishing. We need to look at land as one of many ways to help ameliorate these issues and use it in a way that promotes smart growth and long-term sustainability. I think the County should adjust the balance by promoting smart development while further supporting our farmland and agricultural through agrotourism. Additionally, the County can invest in infrastructure to incentivize private development in desired locations while fostering agricultural prosperity.

OPB: Washington County was one of the counties hardest hit by the escalation in immigration enforcement last year. Is there anything more Washington County can do to protect its immigrant residents if we see another surge in ICE activity? In what ways, if any, should the county work with the federal government when it comes to immigration?

The County can and *must* do more to protect immigrant neighbors. The County should lead in partnership with cities, nonprofits, and community members in identifying ways to protect our neighbors from unjust detentions while also pushing back against illegal actions from the federal government.

The Sheriff should document and publish all interactions with ICE, record and report human rights violations, and uphold existing laws by citing traffic violations and other illegal activities by the federal government. The Sheriff can also provide support after ICE activity by doing things like returning belongings (such as vehicles) back to their families and sharing that a person was taken by ICE.

I do not believe the County should work with the federal government at all when it comes to immigration. Immigration is a federal issue, and the County has enough public safety issues to address without supporting a rogue federal agency that is violating human rights, subjecting our neighbors to abuse, and using administrative rules as cudgels to further harm communities.

OPB: Last year the county tried to strike a balance with its DEI policies between upholding its values and not making a target of itself for the Trump administration. Was this the right approach? Why or why not? What would you do going forward?

I disagree with the County's approach to repeal its DEI policies and believe that the County should have stood stronger for our community in the face of illegal executive orders and grant requirements. I do not believe the County even accomplished the goal of not making itself a target for the Trump administration, as the County faced one of the nation's largest immigration enforcement actions later in the year.

The executive order and grant requirements stated that jurisdictions cannot implement DEI policies that violate federal law. To me, that means the County should have been concerned whether its actions violated federal law. However, during a board meeting, County Administrator Tanya Ange noted that the Budget Equity Tool was going to be renamed to the Budget Access and Opportunity tool, but nothing about the content of the tool would change. That points to a fundamental flaw in reasoning by the County – DEI language itself does not violate federal law, yet there are multiple instances where the County reiterated that it is only changing wording to align with the law. I also disagree with the decisions because the grants require subrecipients to abide by requirements signed by the County, something that was poorly communicated to nonprofit partners and merely shifts liability in our community to our partners instead of the County.

Going forward, I will update the County's DEI policies in partnership with the Advisory Council on Racial Equity. I will work with the Commission to create a process that examines policies and practices to ensure that the County is complying with federal law (regardless of executive orders, which are not law). Additionally, if federal money were withheld from the County, I would pursue legal action against the federal administration to ensure our community has access to the resources it is legally allowed.

OPB: How do you plan to approach the tightening budget that Washington County and jurisdictions across the state face? Would you consider incremental cuts county wide or larger cuts to a few specific departments? Would you consider new taxes or other means of raising funds to prevent cuts?

I plan to approach the tightening budget through robust community engagement and a long-term strategic plan. Engagement is critical to ensure that the County understands our community's needs and there is a level of certainty about service delivery. Incremental cuts without a longer term plan result in poor outcomes for Washington County.

I would consider cuts to County services, large and small, to address the long-standing budget woes of the County. In particular, I would like to examine the cost of urban services provided by the county. The County has the second highest urbanized unincorporated

population in the state and should collect ensure revenue comes from those that benefit most from the County's services.

Expenditure reductions are a necessary part of the equation. I am also a proponent of the County's current efforts to identify alternative revenue streams. A key consideration of any new revenues will be the impact on working families and providing relief to those who are struggling.