

## **Position 2**

### **Paul Savas**

**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?**

Savas: The simple answer is to avoid any tax increases. Historically my approach has been to ward off unnecessary tax increases. For the most part tax increases happen at the state rather than the Clackamas County Commission. Voters ultimately approve most tax increases unless it is implemented at the state level.

My efforts to fight Tolling on I205 is the best example of advocacy on behalf of households as it would have had a significant financial burden on households.

Over the years property tax relief for seniors has been of interest of mine, however the State does not allow Counties to independently reduce property taxes to seniors despite recent attempts by the state legislature. Nonetheless I will continue to advocate for property tax relief. However there is a property tax deferral program offered by the State for those who qualify. I will find a way to educate struggling households about this program.

Utility costs for wastewater is and has been an opportunity for reducing household impacts though limited to urban areas.

A few years ago I voted with the Board of Commissioners to reduce the county's vehicle registration fee.

Another strategy of ours has been to encourage new or expanding businesses that provide "higher than average salaries" to expand in Clackamas county. Higher wages would of course help families pay their household bills.

We have worked hard to implement the Governor's housing initiative by building more affordable housing, in turn adding more inventory to help reduce demand.

Transportation costs due to congestion in our region add to the cost of living such as groceries. We are advocating for "freight mobility" solutions that will ease the inflationary pressures on household goods.

In summary what I hear from the business community is added regulations and taxes increase their overhead, hence their response is "we have to pass that cost on to our customers".

**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?**

The ambulance service provider AMR is the only provider in this region which has resulted in a non-competitive environment. We did employ measures in our latest contract to hold them accountable for response times in Clackamas County. Fortunately most AMR transports are covered by insurance and or medical plans, very few people lack coverage that would otherwise expose them to higher rates. Hence the balance resulted in retaining emergency services for provision of ambulance vs no ambulance provider for emergencies. Most importantly, when someone has an emergency getting to the hospital in time is often a matter of life or death. Balancing of whether having emergency transport or not was a consideration, but having better controls in the contract that addressed response times was an improvement over the prior contract.

**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?**

The term “fully funded” has a different meaning depending on one’s understanding of CCSO’s fiscal challenges and or one’s definition. For example, the Public Safety Levy promised to deliver a defined number of staffing and services. Due to financial accounting/management shortcomings in prior years and inflation, actual costs to deliver those services were not properly accounted for. This resulted in the Public Safety Levy unable to “fully fund” the services as represented to the voters in the Levy. This challenge also applies to other funding streams and services provided by CCSO. The good news is that CCSO and County financial staff are working together to right the ship whereby we will soon have better numbers to define what funding is required for the array of services CCSO provides. Ideally we can then determine what the cost is fund CCSO operations.

Another point of misunderstanding is the number of historically unfilled positions that for years have not been funded. This could easily be interpreted that the CCSO has not been fully funded for over a decade.

That said, we have a long history of fully funding CCSO’s budgeted expenditures and will continue to do so.

**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?**

The region has given credence to the principles of supply and demand whereby increasing supply would ultimately reduce demand and the cost of housing.

The Governor has declared a Housing emergency to address the shortage. Clackamas County has a long history and good track record of building affordable housing and we know this helped address homelessness however there are not enough resources to build our way out of the homeless crisis. The Clackamas County Housing Authority has been in existence for over 80 years, which covers both urban and rural areas.

There are more resources for the urban areas such as the Metro Housing Bond and SHS funding. It should be noted that there are and have been homeless people in both urban and rural.

We are also looking for ways to encourage homebuilders to build in Clackamas County by streamlining permitting and seeking incentives. Clackamas County has an approach to help transition people back in to the workplace and ultimately becoming independent.

While there is no single answer we are taking a multipronged approach to mitigate this challenge and we have been successful in achieving results.

**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?**

Several years ago the Clackamas County sheriff's office was sued for detaining an individual on behalf of a request from ICE. We lost that case and we learned the difference between an administrative warrant and a judicial warrant. The (loss) payout of taxpayer dollars due to losing that case has resulted in exercising caution in how we approach warrants.

Because of interpretations of State law, and recent legal challenges we do our best to comply within the parameters of the law, which at times conflict with federal law. It should be noted that Clackamas County has an independently elected Sheriff, the Sheriffs office's practice currently is to respond to judicial warrants and follow the ever evolving interpretation of federal and state law.

In summary the County cannot afford to lose any more taxpayer dollars on this issue. We hope battles between the State and Federal governments becomes more clear after the Court challenges are resolved.

