

Position 2

Mark Shull

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?

Shull: You're right—many outside forces drive up the cost of living, from federal monetary policy and inflation to state mandates on land use, energy, and transportation. As a county commissioner, I can't control interest rates, national supply chains, or Salem's decisions, but I can control how Clackamas County spends your tax dollars, regulates development, and advocates for our residents. My approach is straightforward: keep county government lean, reduce the regulatory burden that drives up housing and business costs, and prioritize core services without raising taxes. Specifically:

- Hold the line on the county budget. I'll demand fiscal discipline—auditing every department for waste and inefficiency, eliminating duplication, and rejecting any new or expanded taxes or fees. Property taxes are already a heavy burden here, especially for seniors and working families on fixed incomes. We can deliver essential services like public safety and roads more efficiently, just as past commissions have done without tax hikes.
- Boost housing supply to lower costs. The fastest way to make housing more affordable is to build more of it. I'll push to streamline permitting, cut red tape, and reform local land-use rules that delay or block new homes. More market-rate and workforce housing increases supply and brings prices down naturally—no costly mandates or subsidies required. I will continue to influence lawmakers on the need to relax Oregon land use laws.
- Support economic growth and oppose cost-increasing policies. I'll work to attract jobs and businesses by keeping our regulatory environment business-friendly. That means actively opposing state-level burdens like tolling on I-205 or new taxes that get passed on to families and employers. Stronger local jobs and wages help residents keep up with living costs.

Clackamas County residents work hard and deserve a commissioner who treats their tax dollars like their own. Affordability isn't just a slogan—it's about practical steps at the county level that deliver real relief. I'm committed to those steps."

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?

Public safety is foundational—residents expect fast, reliable emergency response when they dial 911, whether it's law enforcement through the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office or ambulance services. I support fully funding the CCSO through the public safety levy to maintain patrol deputies, jail beds, and critical services that keep our communities safe. At the same time, we must be good stewards of residents' dollars, especially as costs of living continue to rise. The Sheriff must understand that it is not financially possible to fill 100% of her wish list. The recent 10-year contract with American Medical Response (AMR), approved last summer, includes a significant price increase for patients—more than doubling base rates in some cases—while aiming to improve historically poor response times through performance incentives, penalties, and stricter standards. I understand the frustration: no one wants slower ambulances, but families and seniors shouldn't face sticker-shock bills for life-saving care either. As commissioner, here's how I'd balance the two:

- Enforce strict accountability on the current contract. AMR must meet the updated response time goals and clinical performance metrics. If they fall short, we should use every tool available—penalties, liquidated damages, and potential termination or re-bid—to hold them responsible. The performance-based structure is a step forward, but it only works with rigorous oversight and transparent monthly reporting to the Board.
- Explore long-term alternatives to reduce costs and improve service. A single-provider monopoly limits options. I'll push for competitive bidding when possible, stronger partnerships with local fire districts for first-response and paramedic services, and innovations like better triage (e.g., nurse navigation for lower-acuity calls) to keep ambulances available for true emergencies. We should also examine ways to offset patient costs, such as maximizing insurance reimbursements or exploring regional collaborations without new county spending.
- Maintain fiscal discipline across public safety. Supporting the Sheriff's Office doesn't mean blank checks. We'll audit for efficiencies, eliminate waste, and

prioritize core services. Any rate adjustments or new costs must be justified with clear data showing improved outcomes—not just passed on to residents. Affordability and safety aren't opposing goals; when government spends wisely and demands results from contractors, both improve.

Clackamas County residents deserve responsive emergency services and protection from unnecessary cost increases. I'll work to deliver both through oversight, competition where feasible, and a commitment to treating taxpayer and patient dollars with care."

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?

Public safety is non-negotiable—Clackamas County residents deserve a well-staffed Sheriff's Office that can respond quickly, maintain our low crime rates, and keep our communities secure. When candidates, including me, talk about 'fully funding the CCSO,' we mean providing the resources needed to reach and sustain full staffing levels for patrol deputies, jail operations, investigations, and related services, consistent with the goals the Board has previously set and the priorities funded through the public safety levy. The reality is that the Sheriff's Office is not currently at full operational strength in all areas, so the Sheriff will need to juggle expenses when necessary. We will have challenges with financial forecasting, spending controls, and communication between the Sheriff's Office and county administration. As commissioner, I will support full funding for essential public safety functions, but never with a blank check. Here's how I would ensure sound financial management and fiscal responsibility:

- Demand rigorous oversight and accountability. I'll insist on enhanced monitoring, regular financial reporting, and performance audits of the Sheriff's Office, building on the new policies the county has already put in place after last year's issues. Departments must live within their approved budgets, with early warnings and corrective action if projections show overruns.
- Prioritize efficiencies before asking for more. We'll work collaboratively with the Sheriff to identify waste, duplication, or outdated practices—whether in personnel costs, materials and services, or contracting—while protecting frontline deputies. Any additional general fund support must be justified with clear data showing improved outcomes, not just rising costs.

- Protect taxpayers amid the levy renewal. The current public safety levy expires at the end of 2026, and voters will decide on its renewal in May. I support renewing it at a responsible level to maintain critical services like patrol, jail beds, and body-worn cameras, but I'll oppose unnecessary rate increases. We should fund core safety needs through disciplined budgeting and economic growth that expands the tax base, not by repeatedly hiking property taxes on working families and seniors.

Affordability and public safety go hand in hand. A lean, accountable county government can deliver both: strong law enforcement that prevents crime and keeps response times high, without driving up costs for residents. I'll treat every tax dollar as if it were my own and hold all departments, including the Sheriff's Office, to that standard."

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 homes is essential to lowering housing costs in Clackamas County. Basic economics shows that when supply is severely constrained relative to demand, prices and rents rise sharply. Our county faces this reality today, with high costs pricing out working families, young people, and seniors. As commissioner, my strategy focuses on increasing housing supply through targeted, responsible actions while protecting the rural character that makes Clackamas special. Key strategies to increase supply and lower costs:

- Streamline permitting and cut red tape. Excessive delays and regulatory hurdles drive up construction costs, which get passed on to buyers and renters. I'll push for faster, more predictable review processes for projects that meet clear, objective standards—without compromising safety or environmental protections. Much of your building permit are add on fees from the state government. The legislature needs to trim those.
- Support middle housing and density where appropriate. In urban and unincorporated areas inside the Urban Growth Boundary, encourage duplexes, triplexes, cottage clusters, and other "missing middle" options that add units without changing neighborhood character. This includes leveraging state laws like HB 2001 while ensuring infrastructure keeps pace. I always listen to local neighborhood residents on this issue.

- Prioritize workforce and market-rate housing. New supply at various price points helps moderate overall costs. I'll support public-private partnerships that deliver homes families can actually afford, paired with economic growth to create local jobs and wages that match living expenses.
- Address homelessness through housing + services. Unsheltered homelessness won't end with housing alone. We need more permanent supportive housing options, better coordination with mental health and addiction services (building on efforts like the Stabilization Center and Clackamas Village), and prevention programs like eviction assistance. Increased overall housing supply reduces pressure on the system and helps move people from shelters or streets into stable homes.

Protecting rural Clackamas is non-negotiable. Rural reserves, farm and forest lands, and unincorporated communities define our county's quality of life and economy. I do not support converting rural or resource lands into urban-style development—that would undermine Oregon's long-standing land-use framework and harm agriculture, forestry, and natural areas. Instead, we'll focus new housing inside the existing Urban Growth Boundary and in already-designated growth areas, where services like roads, water, and sewer can be provided efficiently. Limited tools like accessory dwelling units (ADUs) can add modest rural housing options without altering the sparse, rural character. If we get serious about removing barriers to construction while safeguarding rural lands, we can make meaningful progress on affordability and homelessness. This approach treats taxpayer dollars responsibly, respects Oregon's planning traditions, and delivers real relief for residents who want to live and work here."

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?

No, Clackamas County should not take a firm stance declaring itself a sanctuary jurisdiction or announcing that our agencies will not cooperate with federal immigration enforcement without a judicial warrant. Oregon's statewide sanctuary laws (including the Sanctuary Promise Act) already impose significant restrictions on local law enforcement and public agencies regarding cooperation with federal immigration authorities. Adding a county-level declaration would go beyond what state law requires and send the wrong message about our priorities. Clackamas County's primary responsibility is to protect the safety and well-being of all our residents. That means our Sheriff's Office and other agencies should focus on enforcing state and local laws without hesitation. When

someone commits serious crimes—such as violence, theft, drug trafficking, or DUI—they should face full consequences, including cooperation with federal authorities where legally appropriate. Public safety suffers when criminal illegal immigrants are released back into our communities instead of being turned over for federal removal proceedings. This undermines trust in law enforcement and increases costs for victims, jails, and county services. I support repealing Oregon’s sanctuary state law so that local agencies have the flexibility and clarity to work cooperatively with federal partners like ICE on criminal cases. Until then, as commissioner, I will:

- Oppose any new county resolutions or ordinances that expand or symbolically strengthen sanctuary policies beyond state requirements.
- Encourage the Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office to honor lawful federal detainers and requests whenever possible, especially for individuals with criminal convictions or pending charges.
- Prioritize data-driven public safety: track recidivism by those with immigration holds, ensure transparency in how immigration-related cases are handled, and advocate for state-level changes that put Oregonians first.

Clackamas County is not Multnomah County. Our residents value law and order, fiscal responsibility, and strong communities. We should not adopt policies that prioritize shielding immigration violators over protecting families from preventable crime. Cooperation with federal law enforcement on criminal matters is common sense—it enhances safety without turning our deputies into immigration agents. That’s the balanced, responsible approach I will bring to the Board."

People can read my editorial on this subject in the April edition of the HOODVIEW NEWS or HOODVIEWNEWS.COM.