

## **District 2**

### **Blayne Soleymani-Pearson**

**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?**

Soleymani-Pearson: We need to build in a way that balances economic growth and affordable housing while protecting and respecting our environment and avoiding unsustainable sprawl. SB 1586 exemplifies this imbalance approach. SB 1586 supporters were willing to jump on a temporary solution that would have only created bigger problems later. Not only was it a violation of the 2014 Grand Bargain to protect specific land as rural reserves for 50 years, but it expanded tax breaks for wealthy corporations, failed to provide protections against data centers, and contributed to sprawl without addressing transportation or housing needs. Proponents pointed to job creation, but it would have mostly created temporary construction jobs rather than the long-term employment needed to justify such negative trade-offs. To cap it all off, it cut the local community out of the conversation. Land use decisions of this magnitude must be handled locally with robust community input.

**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?**

Asking if Washington County can do more implies that we have done much of anything at all. I have watched an active campaign by elected officials telling the public that the local government is powerless regarding ICE and the federal enforcement. That is simply untrue. On a basic level, we can use legal obstacles to slow down or stop federal agents from acting unconstitutionally, and we must act to hold them accountable when they violate the law. This is not a controversial legal opinion; it aligns exactly with what the Oregon Attorney General outlined in November 2025. That is why I worked directly with community advocates, policy writers, and other attorneys to draft a policy proposal for both Beaverton and Hillsboro designed to offer real protection for our residents, or at the very least, accountability for those whose rights have been violated.

The Trump administration has repeatedly violated the civil rights of our residents; these are mothers, fathers, siblings, and family members who have been systematically denied basic

due process. It is a complete abdication of our local values to cooperate with the federal government when its actions are in direct violation of the Constitution of the United States.

**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?**

The county leadership took absolutely the wrong approach. We have seen that jurisdictions that stood their ground on this issue won their cases, kept their funding, and maintained their policies. Washington County is one of the most diverse counties in Oregon. To preemptively abandon our DEI policies without even mounting a legal defense is a complete abdication of the Board's responsibilities. As county commissioner, I commit to fighting for every member in our community - regardless of race, sex, gender, religion among other protected categories. The federal government cannot successfully tie our local DEI policies to any tangible harm connected to the funding they provide; so I will fight back rather than give in. Finally, our ultimate layer of protection is to stop relying on federal funding wherever possible. We need a comprehensive audit of our federal revenue streams to identify where we can transition to alternate, independent revenue sources. The less we rely on the federal government, the less leverage they have over our local values.

**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?**

First, we must look at opportunities for sustainable revenue growth. Our land use decisions, especially in unincorporated areas, have been woefully inadequate. Reimagining our zoning to attract more middle housing options will go a long way toward generating long-term revenue. Next, we have to completely rethink how we define a vital service. For example, the Washington County Sheriff's Office recently indicated that if the public safety levy failed, the Mental Health Response Team would face cuts. At the same time, the office implemented a new drone pilot program. When we need to tighten our belts, I will prioritize preventative mental health responses over reactive drone policing. If forced to choose, our energy and dollars must go toward prevention. We need a similar shift in how we approach housing. It is far cheaper, less traumatic, and more effective to stop people from falling into homelessness than it is to rehouse them once they are on the streets. We still need shelter capacity, but by prioritizing funding that keeps people in their homes, we slow down the flow of people entering the system. This allows us to spend less money overall while providing higher-quality help to those who are currently unhoused.