

**Board Chair
Pam Treece**

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?

Treece: Land in Washington County is incredibly precious - for our economy, our environment, and our people. I have heard repeatedly about the impact of job losses and high prices and know we must attract more high-paying jobs. Doing that in a way that protects farms, forestland, and green spaces will require careful attention and collaboration with our partners as urban growth boundaries are set by Metro and our cities. I am confident that as Chair I can help Washington County find that balance, and I'm proud to have the support of 11 of our county's mayors and Metro councilors Rosenthal and Lewis.

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 ICE activity our communities experienced last fall was horrific. Washington County prides itself on our diversity. The fact that so many of our residents feel unsafe – then and now – is unacceptable. I was proud to join my colleagues in declaring a state of emergency around these federal enforcement operations, and in providing funding to support our immigrant populations. The power we have as local officials to control the federal government is unfortunately limited. It is incredibly challenging to feel powerless as our communities suffer – a feeling I'm sure is shared by so many. As Chair, I will seek out additional actions to oppose these immigration activities *and* show strong support for our immigrant neighbors, and I will continue to use my voice and platform to aggressively oppose this activity.

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 situation the Trump administration put us, and many other local governments in, was abhorrent. We are the most diverse county in the state, and we were also one of the first counties in the state to be presented with this ultimatum. The decision comes in the fifth straight year of budget cuts, during a difficult budget process where we have tried to protect core services for our community members.

Let's be clear: to advance their racist political agenda, the federal government weaponized the resources we need to support our community. My job is to protect the most vulnerable in our community – especially when the federal government doesn't. These resources go to provide critical services – from housing to the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program – and other basic community needs.

We must stand up to Trump's xenophobic, hateful agenda. It is our duty as local leaders to preserve how our community is protecting those under attack. Cutting programs for the vulnerable will make us weaker in the face of this administration. Defunding and threatening the future of our nonprofit partners will make us weaker. Setting us up for costly litigation in federal court will make us weaker. And that is the perspective with which I supported the resolution, and it will guide my decision making moving forward.

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?

Budgeting – particularly when making cuts – is a difficult process that requires input from many sources to come to a thoughtful decision. My personal approach to budget decisions is guided by how we can most effectively utilize the available funds and what cuts will have as little impact as possible on our residents. I am proud to participate in the budgeting process with our community members through our budget committees

Given the incredible economic strains I know so many are feeling in our community, new taxes would be a last resort, but we will have to weigh that with the critical services it is possible we will have to cut down the road.

I do know that supporting the local economy is central to addressing the budget shortfalls Washington County has experienced year after year. That shortfall has resulted in \$98M in cuts to our general fund and continues to threaten the funding of fundamental services the County provides. Applying my skillset in economic development to focus on prosperity for our County will be a top priority of mine.

OPB: As chair how would you help the board of commissioners maintain good working relationships among members and county staff even when disagreements arise?

As Chair, I am committed to improving collegiality between commissioners, staff, and the larger community. Throughout my career as a public school teacher, workforce development officer, leader of a regional economic development association, and today as a County Commissioner, I have approached the work with a commitment to dignity and respect for everyone. It is how you build trust and ensure collaboration. As Chair, it is my hope that by focusing on people, I can help us reach new heights as a county and create a space that fosters collaboration and professionalism for all involved in the process.