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Commissioner Seat # 5

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Top Priorities

What are your three top priorities if elected to the Board of County Commissioners?

Wildfire Mitigation: Wildfire continues to be our greatest threat to life and property all across Deschutes County. In a few hours, a fire can destroy hundreds of homes and businesses and damage vital infrastructure that would take a decade and untold millions of dollars to rebuild. It's critical the County continues to support programs like fuels reduction, home hardening, and code changes.

Affordable Housing: It's no secret there is insufficient affordable housing options for our workforce and other community members. Oregon land use laws place the onus of housing mostly on our cities, so the County needs to be a strong partner with cities by supporting creative solutions around land use and advocating for state and federal dollars to help build the homes we need.

Build a Better Board: Deschutes County voters passed two key initiatives: adding 2 new Commissioner positions and making all 5 of the seats nonpartisan. This tells me residents are tired of party politics and are unhappy with the representation and level of service currently provided by the Board. This is a once in 100 years opportunity to

reinvent how the BOCC can better serve the citizens, governments, and businesses in Deschutes County.

Business Competitiveness & Regulatory Predictability

County governments play a key role in land use planning, permitting, and regional economic development. What role should Deschutes County government play in supporting economic development and maintaining Central Oregon's competitiveness as a place for businesses to invest and create jobs?

Deschutes County government can support business in a number of ways. It should continue to partner with our local organizations like EDCO, chambers of commerce, business associations, and other entities that work to support our businesses, attract new companies, and train our workforce.

The addition of 2 new Commissioner seats will provide 2 more sets of ears and eyes and improve the accessibility for business owners and advocates to engage with the BOCC on important issues.

County services like business and building permitting should be routinely reviewed to ensure businesses are being provided efficient and top-notch customer service.

And County Commissioners and staff need to work with state and federal elected officials to improve issues that go beyond the borders of Deschutes County, like streamlining state permitting processes, improving clean energy generation and transmission, reducing redundant taxes and fees, and advocating for a safe and efficient transportation infrastructure.

Workforce Availability

Employers across Central Oregon report difficulty recruiting and retaining workers due to housing affordability, childcare access, and other cost-of-living pressures.

What actions should Deschutes County take to help increase the supply of workforce housing as well as access to childcare in the region?

The County needs to continue encouraging cities to research and codify a wider variety of housing types (as should the County in residential areas (like Terrebonne, Tumalo, and destination resorts). Dormitories, or SRO housing, are currently not allowed in most zones but would be very useful in housing seasonal workers at our many resorts, farms, and ski areas. And ADUs, mobile/modular home parks, and cottage developments need to be allowed where appropriate. The BOCC can work with cities and rural communities to help find funding for infrastructure to help bring construction costs down.

The County and BOCC should continue working with state agencies to remove barriers to building more daycare facilities and provide more financial assistance to workers that cannot afford the high cost of quality childcare. Large employers need to be engaged and asked why they aren't providing on-site daycare and how the County or other agencies can help. Even a few daycares housed at key employers can help free up daycare spots for workers of smaller businesses and help with recruitment and retention.

Infrastructure That Enables Regional Growth

Rapid population growth in Central Oregon is increasing demand for infrastructure to support housing, job creation, and economic activity. What transportation investments or state highway priorities should Deschutes County advance, particularly related to Highway 97, to improve safety, reduce congestion, and support regional mobility?

I sit on the Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation and am Vice-Chair of the Deschutes County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Along with my City Council work, these committees expose me to a wide range of transportation challenges and ideas.

The County and other economic development organizations need to look holistically at our transportation networks to define what needs to get where and when. To move goods and materials, we need to ask can we utilize rail for the transportation of materials and finished products, can our airports ship more freight, and can we piggy pack local shipments on regular route providers like Cascades East Transit (CET)?

The County should also ask how to best move people by encouraging CET to match stops and times to employer locations and work schedules. The County could support organizations like Commute Options to expand their employer vanpool program. Improving bike/ped networks will also help get more vehicles off our crowded roads.

And the County recently adopted a Transportation Safety Action Plan update which highlights key dangerous locations in the county and details mitigations. It's critical this document does not sit on a shelf and is utilized to keep everyone on our roads safe.

Education & Workforce Readiness

Strengthening the regional workforce pipeline requires collaboration between employers, education providers, and public agencies. How should Deschutes County support partnerships with schools, colleges, and workforce training programs to strengthen the regional talent pipeline?

Thankfully, a number of education programs geared towards training our workforce already exist in Deschutes County. Programs through entities like Heart of Oregon Corps, COIC, East Cascades Works, COCC, OSU Cascades, and our school districts are connecting students to their future careers by providing training resources in partnership with many employers across the county.

Deschutes County should continue to support these programs by finding creative funding sources that allow tax dollars to “kill two birds with one stone.” An example is utilizing state funding for wildfire mitigation to subsidize the Heart of Oregon Corps training crews to perform fuels reduction work around the county. And the BOCC, in coordination with our business and education organizations, should advocate at the state level for more funding for our rapidly growing region.

Balanced Environmental Stewardship & Economic Vitality

Deschutes County must balance competing priorities including housing availability, protection of agricultural lands, water use, rural open space, wildfire preparedness, and habitat preservation. How would you approach these tradeoffs, and what principles would guide your decisions when conflicts arise between increasing housing supply and preserving resource lands?

In general, I respect Oregon’s land use laws because they have protected farmlands, forests, and open spaces while promoting denser development in our cities. This has prevented the blight, traffic, pollution, and high infrastructure costs that come with unchecked urban sprawl. HOWEVER, the land use laws are far from perfect and are overdue for revision after 50 years. Counties like Deschutes should be advocating at the state level for improving the rules versus having the legislature pass numerous and confusing short-term fixes or workarounds.

Serving on the Sisters City Council for over 5 years, I've had the opportunity to be involved in a number of land use decisions. While I respect the state land use rules, I always and will continue to approach each case individually and judge it on its own merits. The key questions that need to be asked by the BOCC are what can be gained by development (i.e. more housing, employment lands), what could be lost (agricultural production, habitat loss, recreation space), how will this parcel fit into existing road, water, and sewer infrastructure and be serviced by emergency response agencies, and what are the short and long term impacts of these changes.

Regional Representation

If elected, how would you work with cities, regional organizations, and the state to advance Central Oregon's economic and infrastructure priorities? How will you ensure local employers and business organizations remain engaged in county decision-making?

As a member of the Sisters City Council for over 5 years, I've had the opportunity to serve on a number of boards focused on economic development, including EDCO, Sisters Country Economic Development, and COIC. I've also had the opportunity to support new entities like the Regional Business Alliance and Sisters Business Association. And I am a small business owner, too! These experiences have provided me with a deep understanding of the needs of our businesses and workforce, too.

The good news is there is a vibrant and diverse economy in Deschutes County. The challenge is to keep it that way. I plan on supporting efforts to provide everything a strong workforce needs: affordable housing, daycare, and job training.

I will also continue to work closely with business owners and organizations supporting economic development by helping elevate our local needs to the state

and federal levels. I'm expecting with the addition of 2 new seats, the BOCC should have better capacity to work with schools, business advocacy groups, and housing specialists to move the needle on making Deschutes County one of the best places to start and grow a business in Oregon and beyond.