

# Umatilla:

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be a priority. In addition, the sheriff's office needs a bigger budget to ensure an adequate number of officers are available in all parts of the county to more efficiently deal with the crime associated with these problems.

The lack of affordable housing has caused many to live on the streets or in their vehicles, including children or the children are farmed out to relatives (they are still considered homeless). Rents in Umatilla County are skyrocketing. A two-bedroom modest duplex can run upwards of \$1,200. Many apartments are up in the \$1,200 to \$1,800 range. Make it easier and cheaper for builders to build houses by incentives such as tax cuts or working with state agencies to cut some of the red tape caused by too many rules and regulations. Expand the urban boundaries, utilize land not suitable for farming and give people a reason to want to live in this county.

### List and discuss your top three goals if you are to be elected.

The first of my top three goals if I am elected is to make sure that our county government is run according to the Constitution. I do not believe in infringing on people's rights, whether that means forcing citizens to follow along with mandates by the state, taking people's property without due process, granting special favors to one sector of the people or enforcing laws that are contrary to the Constitution. We are a home charter county, and we can decide many things that our county will or will not subscribe to under the law.

Secondly, the homeless crisis is paramount to me. I see the interrelation of homelessness, drug legalization and abuse, alcohol abuse and mental health issues (which may or may not be due to drug/alcohol abuse), as the biggest influencers of crime in Umatilla County. We must address the issue of homelessness as it relates to these problems. So, perhaps for those with problems, a set of tiny houses, coupled with mandatory treatment for the problems is the answer, but only if the person is working toward an answer for their problem. I also recognize that the cost of housing is prohibitive even to those who do not suffer from these problems and needs to be addressed. Make Umatilla County more affordable where housing is concerned. Instead of attempting to simply bring in "a more educated workforce" and high-priced apartments, we need to address the hous-



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

**Umatilla County commissioner candidate Rick Pullen speaks to the audience during a candidates forum March 31, 2022, at the Pendleton Convention Center. Holly Jo Beers sits to his left and incumbent John Shafer is on the right. Shafer is vying against the two challengers to retain his Position 2 seat on the board.**

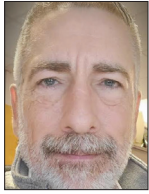
ing problems of those already here.

As for the third goal, I believe that small businesses are the driving force that keeps a county alive. We need to encourage and assist small businesses to thrive. So many were lost during the COVID shutdowns. We, as a county, cannot afford that anymore than the business owners could. Assisting those companies, encouraging new ones to start and refusing to shut down again due to state mandates are primary goals Umatilla County should work on. I do not know where all the "COVID money" went to, but I do know that too many small store owners went out of business when they should have had some assistance.

### Rick Pullen, 57, Pendleton

**If you are elected, what is your plan to address homelessness in the county?**

With the passing of Oregon House Bill 3115, cities will be required to provide shelters or places for homeless people and transients to camp by January 2023. The roll the county needs to play in the homeless crisis will be to provide assistants to our communities so they will be in compliance with this new law.



Pullen

As your county commissioner, I will work with our state and federal legislators on finding funding to help mitigate the issue, not necessarily of the chronically homeless, but of the low-income individuals or families that have lost access to housing and are in the transition of searching for new housing. I would be working on the

front end of this with "housing assistant programs" to help families and individuals keep their homes or to get into new homes.

1. Security deposit and rent assistants programs.
2. Educational programs on financial budgeting.
3. Job assistants or new skill training programs.
4. Working on more felon friendly home and job opportunities.
5. Eviction assistants due to emergencies.

These are things we can do to help ease the burden of homelessness in our county.

List and discuss your top three goals if you are to be elected.

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**1. Affordable housing**  
A couple of the issues are, available land, development cost and our property tax system.

In the past 10 years the cost of housing in Umatilla County has increased over 10%. Per the most recent housing analysis Pendleton and Hermiston alone has over 1400 undeveloped parcels, some are unbuildable lots but most of those are oversized subdividable lots. Example, two city lots are currently being developed and will provide over 100 residential units.

As for the roll the county could play:

Help developers by decreasing lot size requirements in some location which would increase number of lots that can be subdivided.

Look into changing zoning in areas where land isn't being used as zoned.

Work with state and federal legislators on infrastructure grants.

Working with Department of Land Conservation

& Development for expanding urban growth boundaries and applying for variances.

Working in assessment, I have seen what affects our current tax system has on development cost, and I am aware of changes that need to be made and have the connections at the state level to start addressing those issues.

Bringing in family wage jobs is part of affordable housing, and I will do everything in my power to see all our communities prosper.

**2. Security**  
Emergency preparedness needs to be a higher priority in Umatilla County. Today, threats come to us in many different ways. The floods of 2019 and 2020 left many county residents in ruin. Also in 2020, multiple counties were hit with ransomware shutting down computer systems completely and costing these counties hundreds of thousands of dollars in ransom payments to reactivate the county computer systems bringing them back up online. Having a background in emergency preparedness, I believe it is time we start being more proactive, not just reactive.

**3. County charter**  
We the people of Umatilla County voted to have a home rule county with a charter to guide our commissioners.

When your county Charter Review Committee works 18 months on a volunteer basis and brings their recommendations forward to the county commissioners, it is the expectation of the committee that the commissioners would honor their invested time and bring these recommendations to the public for a vote. When they do not, this is denying the people of Umatilla County the choice to decide how they want their county governed.

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As your county commissioner I will not hold this office so tightly that it prohibits the public from having their voices heard. Our county is made up of many communities and diverse groups small and large. As a county we all deserve a seat at the table to collaborate and cooperate with each other. I believe when it comes to the overall wellbeing of our county, every voice should be heard. We are all allowed one vote and it is not my right to take yours from you. If elected, I will follow the charter as designed, giving true transparency and power back to the people of Umatilla County.

### John Shafer, 50, Umatilla County commissioner

**If you are elected, what is your plan to address homelessness in the county?**

Commissioner George Murdock sits on the board of directors of Community Action Program of East Central Oregon. Upon his retirement, I will be replacing him on that board. CAPECO is currently renovating the former

W h i s k e y Inn in Pendleton. This will become the Promise Inn with the purpose of getting our homeless population back on their feet. Once completed, the Promise Inn will provide people with a place to stay while receiving wraparound services.

On the west end of the county there is a similar project in the planning stages. In both locations they will receive wraparound services. Services will include helping them get back on their feet, finding a job and a place to live while having access to quality mental health care, if needed. This program will also address food insecurities.

Let's face it, if you are trying to figure out where your next meal is coming from, or where you will sleep tonight, you are probably not too concerned about your child turning in their homework. By allowing our homeless population to not worry about where their next meal is coming from or worry about where they will lay their head down at night, they can instead focus their efforts on their family and staying healthy. I will continue to support these efforts county-wide.

**List and discuss your top three goals if you are to be elected.**

My first priority is to have a place where someone in a mental health crisis can go and receive services that



Shafer

will not put them in jail or the hospital while they wait for a bed to open up in an acute psychiatric care facility. We currently do not have an acute psychiatric care facility in Umatilla County. My goal is to have one up and running within my next term. This is also a priority for Community Counseling Solutions, whose board of directors I sit on. CCS is our mental health provider in Umatilla County, which I was instrumental in bringing in during my first term in office. We are currently in negotiations to see an acute psychiatric care facility here in Umatilla County become a reality.

I also want to bring our Central Water Project to a successful conclusion. This is a project that I brought to the rest of the board of commissioners in 2019. We have secured over \$8 million in funding as of this writing, with the expectation of another \$2.5 million coming soon. Oregon has seven critical groundwater areas. Four of them are in the Hermiston area. This project will have the ability to put 29,326,590 gallons of water into the ground per day at full build out.

I am eager to see this project begin to benefit Umatilla County in multiple ways. This will help our farmers by increasing the amount of water they can put on crops and extend their growing season. Not only will the water increase the yield of our crops for our famers, but it will increase economic development opportunities with the upcoming transfer of the Army Depot land to the Columbia Development Authority, of which I am a board member of. This will also recharge our rapidly diminishing aquifers. It also has a component to help the cities get more water for future expansion.

My third priority is to work on the unintended consequences of Ballot Measure 110. This is the decriminalization of drugs. Working with Salem has been out of the question. We need a local solution to this. We need to work with our judges, law enforcement and community partners to solve this issue here in Umatilla County.

Someone with an addiction may need treatment and Ballot Measure 110 has tied the hands of the justice system to help bring those with addiction into treatment. Salem took the mechanism in place away by decriminalizing drugs. It is my hope that working with our local partners we can find local solutions to break the strongholds of addiction. This is a project that will continue to benefit the region for generations to come.

# Morrow:

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opening up respectful and meaningful communications with the multitude of partners, residents and perspectives.

Citizen health will continue to be a growing area of resource needs into the future as we continue to come back together post COVID. I plan to use my voice along side our partners in public health, mental health and public safety along with our neighboring counties to bring the resources needed to support our citizens and businesses.

Further, Morrow County,

will have to work toward building up our internal workforce that can support the growing size and needs of our citizen base at every level from Veterans services and Public Health, roads, planning and transportation. We must further engage our diverse population to ensure we have the resources available to build the county teams that serve the public.

### List and discuss your top three goals if you are to be elected.

My first goal is to continue my fearless commitment to transparent and accessible government. I will always support fiscally responsible and transparent budgeting and operations. I will work to improve inclusion of all of the

cultures and citizens across our county. I will continue to ask the hard questions and to having the difficult conversations that lead to proactive and responsible decision making, not reactive, agenda filled and costly. My work during the pandemic writing tirelessly to keep our county, schools and businesses as open as possible made it very apparent that we lack in mirroring the diversity of our county in many stakeholder conversations. I want to work with our partners to invigorate and institute a better opportunity for engagement across the county.

My career in real estate lending showcased my passion for housing as

economic growth and fed my goals in housing and infrastructure, from roads to sewer, water to broadband. I have worked for years to promote housing development. I will continue my focus to support infrastructure that is needed to entice further development. While I appreciate cities jurisdiction over municipal housing I believe the county can be a complementary partner in advocating for zoning, such as the rural residential 10 acre zoning opportunity I supported. My state appointment to the Local Officials Advisory council to the LCDC earned me a voice in land use policy. I will continue my work with the Regional Solutions to

bring decision makers and funding opportunities to our communities.

I will further my commitment as the convener of our Broadband Action Team to bring affordability and accessibility of reliable high speed internet. My focus on government service infrastructure includes the historic county courthouse in need of preservation and improved access to serve customers in court activities. I recently was able to secure our place in line for potential State funding for courthouse restoration and increased services. I believe public health service locations need to assure respectful and appropriate service levels are available where needed, and my motion to rebuild the

government center in Irrigon was a commitment to that community and to our people providing service

My third goal is to maintain level of services to keep pace with the growth. We must have sufficient public health, behavioral health and public safety resources along with general livability opportunities. We can not forget these important aspects to community growth.

I have built relationships with federal, state and local entities that give me the ability to succeed. I will continue to work to make Morrow County thrive as a place work, live and play. I have worked hard to listen and

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