

Applicant for Missoula County Commissioner Vacancy Questionnaire 2015



Missoula County Democrats believe “the well-being of future generations is the primary responsibility of government and the lens through which policymaking in areas as diverse as energy, transportation, education, health care, human rights and taxation should be focused.” We are asking you to complete this questionnaire to highlight your views. Questionnaires should be returned, with the resumes and letter of interest, to Todd Mowbray at secretary@missoulademocrats.org no later than July 17th before the Missoula County Democratic Central Committee applicant forum and meeting on July 28th at 7:00pm in the City Council Chambers. Thank you for your willingness to serve.

Name: Burt Caldwell

Political Party

X Democrat ___ Republican ___ Independent ___ Other Party ___ Prefer not to say

Contact Information

Address: **11575 Chumrau Loop**

City and Zip Code: **Missoula 59802**

Phone: **406-493-1020**

Email: **cbcaldwe@aol.com**

How long have you resided in Missoula County Commissioner District #2

4 Years

Are you planning to run for County Commissioner in 2016? X Yes ___ No

If not, have you endorsed another candidate for that seat? Who?

What are your credentials for running as a Democrat?

I was born into and raised in a solidly Democratic family going back several generations. I have been registered as a Democrat since turning 18. In 2008, I flew from my offices in Indiana to Missoula to knock doors and campaign for Obama, supporting my 2 daughters here and my wife, who was also volunteering with them. In 2014, I was the letter to the editor coordinator in Missoula for the Montana Democratic Party. I am currently on the Bonner Milltown Community Council. I have contributed to the Democratic effort everywhere I have lived. More than anything though, what qualifies me as a Democrat are

my values. I believe in good government that supports the rights, equality, education, health, and opportunity for success of all citizens.

Please list people who have endorsed your candidacy

While I have solicited support from members of the Missoula County Democratic Central Committee for this nomination, I have chosen to await the decision of the Central Committee before soliciting any other endorsements.

What is your vision for Missoula County's future? Please elaborate on short-term goals (over the remainder of Commissioner Carey's term) and long-term goals as well as the means available to achieve these goals.

My vision is for Missoula to continue to be the "last best place". To do this, we must attract more environmentally friendly businesses that provide good-paying jobs. We must analyze the current Industrial Land Survey and determine how to best utilize the various currently usable plots in addition to making more of the plots available for use – the White Pine Sash property, for example, could be industrial or residential depending on the level of decontamination that eventually takes place. We need to work for continued progress toward equality in our communities, ensure services for the homeless and others in need, see that all parts of County government run effectively, make plans for responsible and sustainable growth, and create the best possible environment for our children and grandchildren.

While I would champion all these points as commissioner, during the shorter tenure as appointed Commissioner I plan to work closely with county departments on policy revision to ensure their policies support the County Commission's philosophy and the County Growth Policy. I believe my assets can be of greatest use helping departments improve operations and championing Missoula as a great place for businesses to thrive, whether new or expanding. I have been interested in committing myself more fully to public service since retiring in 2009. I have dedicated myself to local work in Missoula and want the home I have chosen, and my children chose before me, to continue to thrive.

Why do you want to be a Missoula County Commissioner?

My family believes Missoula truly is the "last best place" and I want to help keep it that way. Additionally, while I believe the county departments currently provide good service and have great staff, I want to use my skills where possible to improve both the timing and quality of service provided to our citizens. A large part of my background has been focused on customer service, auditing, compliance, and system management for large corporations with thousands of employees and companies in rural communities with fewer than a hundred employees. I am a trained problem solver with experience in improving processes and procedures.

What leadership or board experience has prepared you for serving on the Board of County Commissioners?

I am currently a member in good standing on the Bonner Milltown Community Council, where we have tackled issues such as bridge-jumping into the Clark Fork River, the congested parking situation on Tamarack Road during floating season, completion of the Milltown 2-Rivers State Park, and traffic congestion at the Bonner exit on I-90. Before joining the Council, I worked with the Missoula Economic Partnership in developing a mentoring program to help small businesses be more effective. My years as Operations Manager in various industries have allowed me to develop communication and problem-

solving skills, and my years as an Operations Auditor helped hone my ability to analyze and improve processes, procedures, and methods of customer service from small dollar to multi-million dollar projects. For example, recently I put together a coalition of 15 local organizations to support a proposal for a fly-in at our airport which, if successful, will bring over 2,500 pilots from the Pacific Northwest to Missoula next year. During the past year, I have attended Commissioner meetings, Public Works meetings, and Parks department meetings to better understand the County processes and decisions. I have offered my process expertise to the Elections Administrator in an effort to help improve the voting and vote reporting processes.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges facing Missoula County and what would be your objectives in facing those challenges during the one-year appointment, if appointed?

1. Attaining compliance with the DOJ recommendations for the County Attorney's Department.
2. Developing and marketing our currently usable industrial lands to the manufacturing industry – currently the fastest growing segment of the national economy. And
3. Overcrowding of the county jail.

My first step would be to get all the factual details of each challenge and determine what the Commissioners' role is, could be, or should be. Once this role is defined, I will work with the other Commissioners toward timely solutions. In Missoula, we are blessed to have incredible government and non-profit organizations working day and night on the important issues facing our community. I'd enlist their help in determining what we can do in both the short and long term. While we have many challenges beyond those mentioned above, we also have incredible opportunities for smart growth that provides the chance for our youth to thrive and our elderly to age in place.

Following the City of Missoula and the University of Montana, the County is working with the Department of Justice in a settlement over the prosecution of sexual assault, how would you ensure that the county's actions go above and beyond the basic requirements?

I would request regular meetings with the County Attorney for status updates and the opportunity to offer enhancements to existing plans. I would request meetings with the Sheriff to determine what that department learned from the DOJ recommendations to the City. I would work with our Missoula County law enforcement to ensure the law is being applied evenly and fairly to all citizens. Further, I would work to ensure the Sheriff's department, the City's Police Department, and the University's Security Department work together in their Education efforts to resolve identified problems. With a new County Attorney and a new Sheriff on board, I believe we can look at the DOJ recommendations as base-level ideas and build on them for more robust policies and actions. The DOJ settlement affects us all and will take an "all hands on deck" approach. I look forward to doing whatever I can to help ensure our community is safe and all citizens have access to justice.

Missoula County has had to pay out millions in settlements recently. How could the County Commissioners help county departments, and other County Elected Offices reduce harmful court cases and costs?

While the Commissioners do not directly manage the departments of other elected officials, they have a responsibility to provide oversight and training for improvement. Commissioners could review policies and procedures with the intent of identifying opportunities to avoid, or reduce, potential for conflicts leading to lawsuits. I would like to enlist the help of outside facilitators and trainers to work with departments with a history of lawsuits to improve. I believe all county employees share this goal. We just need to devote the time and resources to make it happen. This is where I believe my background in operations management and auditing might be most useful.

Due to diminishing Federal and state support, local property owners have had to pick up the tab on basic infrastructure. What are your opinions for Local Option Tax including the Local Option Gas Tax?

I am opposed to the Local Option Gas Tax. An additional gas tax will be a regressive tax burden on the poorest of our citizens. In Missoula's economy, the average worker has a minimal amount of discretionary income and little choice on purchasing gas for transportation to and from work. A gas tax will hit this segment of our population – the ones who can afford it the least – the hardest. However, with a growing county population and diminishing state and federal support, we may have to be creative in finding other local tax options that work to keep our services running strong. I am open to a continued dialogue on this topic, and should any new taxes be levied, I think we must be very transparent and thoughtful in communicating the exact need and use to Missoula citizens so they can support the effort.

What, if any, tradeoffs do you see between agriculture and development? What, if any, regulatory approach should be taken given the tradeoff you perceive?

I believe "The Garden City" needs to maintain as much of the existing agricultural lands as possible so we may continue to buy and eat local foods, which are good for us, good for the local economy, and aren't burdened by high transportation costs. As far as a regulatory approach, I am not familiar with the options, but will make being knowledgeable on this topic a priority. I believe we are fortunate to live in a county with a strong diversity of land use including urban residential space, business sectors, agricultural land, and open space. One of the most important on-going issues facing the county commission is how to keep this diverse balance with a growing population and avoid pushing out other land uses in favor of large developments. Each development must be considered on its merits, but the county needs to stay committed to a comprehensive, overarching plan for smart, sustainable growth.

How would you use development regulations to ensure a sustainable pattern of development?

I will have a lot of work to do in catching up on development regulations. That said, I am a supporter of development that allows aging in place through design. One way is to design neighborhoods to allow local, small retail operations, such as a neighborhood grocery, which would reduce traffic to and from the downtown area and allow locals to walk and shop. Designing in some open space for a community garden is another way to aid aging in place and traffic reduction while providing healthier, fresher food. These things, and many more can be guided by county regulations. The Smart Growth concept currently being used

by cities to improve the quality of life while increasing population density could also be applied to the county as a whole. Missoula is doing a number of things that are part of Smart Growth such as mixed-used streets and bike / pedestrian trails. With trails reaching significantly outside of Missoula city proper, the County is obviously also working in this direction. I believe we need to continue expanding on this concept as another way of keeping Missoula the “Last Best Place”.

How would you work to build a spirit of shared community between the diverse segments of Missoula County, especially the rural and urban parts?

I live near Turah, and serve on the Bonner Milltown Community Council. I have attended other Community Council meeting and, as Commissioner, plan to be a frequent visitor at all 7 of the County’s Councils. In addition, I will be attending the Missoula Neighborhood Councils from time to time. As a manager, I have always had an open door policy and plan to continue that in this position. The county government cannot function well without hearing from all parts of the county and using the community councils as they were intended – to improve communication and guidance to the elected officials.

Missoula County recently decided to appoint, rather than assign to an elected clerk and recorder, election administration duties. Would you support making the election administrator an elected official again? And how will you evaluate the effectiveness of elections office as it exists today?

Initially, I favored the position being elected. However, I have spent time learning about the office and the Administrator’s responsibilities. I am now convinced this should continue as an appointed position. I have two main thoughts here: first, an appointment helps ensure the placement of a competent manager with appropriate skills and knowledge; second, a well-run organization cannot afford to be short a key player during its most stressful period, which is what happens when the elected Administrator is a candidate and is not allowed into the polling places to monitor, trouble-shoot, or aid in the processes of voting and vote tabulation, as is the Administrator’s job. This is a tough issue with both pros and cons, and I am open to continued dialogue.

What are your plans for economic development in Missoula County?

First, I will thoroughly review the Industrial Land Survey to identify all industrial lands currently usable for new business. Next, I suggest we increase the level of marketing being done to bring business to Missoula. And, I suggest an increase in County support of, and involvement with, the Missoula Economic Partnership to encourage / support growing new companies like Rivertop Renewables and Submittable and to continue bringing in new businesses like Harris Thermal, ALCOM, Northwest Paint, and Willis Enterprises. Living near Bonner and passing by the old mill property almost daily, I’ve noticed the positive effect of just one or two additional businesses on the Bonner community. We need to continue connecting businesses with our people, programs, and resources as we have done with the companies mentioned above. I believe my background in industry would make this one of my top priorities and my greatest strength as a Commissioner.

What is your opinion of the amount raised and allocation of the County levy to support poverty reduction efforts?

I believe this is referring to what is called the County's Poor Fund. Looking at the past year's amount and allocation of approximately \$1 million, I am satisfied that while we may be able to do more, it is being allocated appropriately through about 20 agencies. Existing agencies are used to avoid duplication of effort. The allocation is managed by a committee of citizens and a Commissioner, which then makes a recommendation to the Commission. The process is reasonable to me. I believe we should always consider how we can do more throughout our community to support those most in need.

The guiding principle of the City of Missoula's growth policy for five years has been Focus Inward. What, if anything, should the County Commission do about that?

I think the Commissioners should support the City's Focus Inward program as one factor in protecting our agricultural lands and communities. Focus Inward was developed to encourage new growth in the direction of existing infrastructure, and public services. Supporting this program will help sustain our diverse use of lands.

Should the County Commission continue its support for replacing the Maclay Bridge at North Avenue with a bridge at South Avenue?

I am in favor of a bridge at South Street for several reasons, but also with some reservations/restrictions. The Maclay bridge has been in place for a long time and is in need of significant repair work, as do the river banks near it. The Maclay bridge has a basically blind approach to a single lane crossing. And with traffic in the area increasing as Missoula continues to grow, the proposed bridge will undoubtedly increase traffic on South Avenue, which is one of my concerns. However, it will provide a straighter, easier path into and out of Missoula proper. I believe for this bridge to be successful, South Avenue should be wider and lower speed limits enforced. The Maclay bridge could be either demolished or re-designated as a pedestrian / bicycle bridge. I don't have enough information to suggest which, but I look forward to learning more and engaging in the discussion.

Thank you for the opportunity to share some information about myself for your consideration. I wish you good luck as you make this important decision.