

# COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 2

## QUESTION 1:

**Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for the office of County Commissioner.**

### **CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:**

I grew up just outside Superior, Wisconsin, in a family in which public service was a way of life, and have worked hard to live up to that ideal. I graduated from Superior Senior High, attended the University of Wisconsin-Superior, and graduated from UW-Madison with a nursing degree. After working for eight years as a registered nurse, I returned to college and earned a Master's Degree as a Nurse Practitioner from the College of St. Catherine's. Currently, I am employed as a Nurse Practitioner by the Fond du Lac band of Ojibwa. I live in Duluth with my wife Jennifer, a physician, and our two daughters; Mary and Clare.

I was elected to two terms on the Duluth City Council in 2009 and 2013, and was elected in a special election in 2014 to the St. Louis County Board. On the St. Louis County Board, I chaired the Public Safety Committee in 2014 and have been chair of the Health and Human Services Committee from 2015 to present.

I have been active in the community as a member of the Friends of the Lakewalk, Duluth Preservation Alliance, and Peace United Church of Christ. In my free time, I enjoy hunting, fishing, gardening, and running with the family dog.

I am running for re-election to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> District County Commissioner because I want to continue to protect our most vulnerable citizens, maintain a strong budget without undue taxpayer burden, foster economic development and strengthen partnerships between all levels of government.

### **CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:**

I am Linda Ross Sellner and do heartily wish to continue my public service at the County level representing eastern Duluth. I am under-employed in the dental health care field where I have made my living for over 30 years. Besides my Associate in Science degree from UMD in Dental Hygiene, I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Geology-Land Use Planning with a Biology minor, while raising my four daughters with their father during our 20 year marriage. Finding employment in my new field was difficult in middle-age so I began to volunteer with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, South St. Louis County, capturing soil data in the field for two stints. I currently volunteer with the MPCA as a citizen stream monitor for Chester and Tischer trout streams.

I also gathered household data for the U.S. Census bureau in 2010. I understand how important that data was to political representation and for governmental analysis via five semesters of study in GIS (Geographic Information Systems) at UWS, 2009-11.

I am a landlord and have a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor apartment I rent out in the brick house my Father built. Most recently, my education extended to certification as a Building Analyst Professional (Home Energy Auditing) through BPI, Inc. in 2012. I understand energy conservation.

I've served the maximum two terms on the Duluth Environmental Advisory Council and the Duluth Public Utilities Commission where I was voted President.

**QUESTION 2: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:**

**What should state government do about the growing economic disparity between the poor, the middle class and the wealthy?**

In the past year, the most shocking statistic I learned was that between the years 2000 and 2015, the percentage of St. Louis County citizens who were at or below the poverty level grew from 9 to 17%. During that same time period, we saw more job creation than ever in the history of St. Louis County. This tells me there is a significant amount of working-class poor. These people still qualify for child care assistance, medical assistance and food stamps. As a nation, we effectively cannot reduce the welfare burden without creating livable wage jobs along with having equal taxation.

**CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:**

Greed is at the heart of the economic disparity that exists between St. Louis County residents. The basic human desire to provide a better life for our decedents can no longer be achieved. This was the dream of the middle class but the middle class is shrinking into oblivion. Human labor no longer supports the production of goods that build real wealth for all in a community. Quality of life and the natural environment that belongs to all of us is offered up on false belief in the mantras of job creation and increasing tax base. These aren't working for most of us anymore.

Since it is not our responsibility to change the hearts of others or beat on a door that never gets opened, I believe we must use our unemployed time to get involved with our government processes and speak out against injustice, greed and the disproportionate representation and benefit to the 1%.

Blogging, chat rooms and mindless acceptance of media bias won't cut it. Discover what you are passionate about and then get educated about it and speak up, literally or with your vote.

**QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:**

**What are the top three things that the County Board should do to improve the region's economy?**

The county needs to work hand-in-hand with all of our cities to foster growth. A few examples of ways of helping include:

- Funding to remove blighted properties
- Tools to improve recruiting businesses to the area including tax abatement
- Improving our infrastructure so citizens can safely and easily get to these jobs

**CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:**

1. Collaborate w/County officials and staff to move toward economic support to diversify employment opportunities that move us away from large, extractive industries that work on boom or bust cycles.

2. Recognize the unique attributes of St. Louis County that especially pertain to land, water and sense of place for its citizens. If we build on keeping these intact and healthy, we provide future quality of life to our descendants. This is sustainability and we owe it to each other to value it and pass it on.

3. Stop supporting business initiatives that don't produce results, whether that be by more diligent monitoring of proceeds expended or by requiring up-front accountability in providing local employment benefits. External auditing has proven wasteful spending and political posturing within the IRRRB. Taxpayers have been duped and the crooks got away under the guise of "economic development". This initiative deserves tenacious scrutiny by County Commissioners and will then undoubtedly, reverse the current trends to instead apply incentives toward legitimate, sustainable job growth-from the bottom up instead of from the top down.

**QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:**

**What can county government do to help address the impact of global climate change in our region?**

The county already has emphasis on upgrading county owned buildings to be more energy efficient. These buildings have some of the highest energy efficiency ratings around the state, including our newly remodeled Government Services Center in Duluth. We are also investing in solar power.

**CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:**

First of all, let me say that in this election, there is no political party that better reflects the urgency to act on climate change than the Green Party. Despite the national political rhetoric, for or against even the *concept* of climate change, real action must take place at the local level-where the effects are felt. The only opportunity we have to put a Green candidate in place, come the November election, is at the local level with my run for County Commissioner.

I will look at every County decision with an eye to how it will successfully prepare us or push us away from the worthy goal of adapting to climate change, on the ground. The human environment and the natural environment degrade together. Climate change changes everything. We are moving into the survival mode now.

St. Louis County put forward a Comprehensive Water Management Plan in 2010 that seeks to address negative impacts of climate change in regards to the abundant water resources within our County. This includes addressing improper development and maintaining wetland functionality. This noble document was due for mid-decade review in 2015. This has yet to commence, nor have many County officials even read it. To me, this indicates how much of an up-hill battle we have to change the County mindset from economic development that doesn't include environmental precautions and foresight.

**QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:**

**What can county government do to address aging infrastructure (roads and bridges) in the region?**

I am proud of my vote on the half-cent sales tax that is dedicated to improving roads and bridges. This added nearly \$14 million yearly for dedicated funding to repairing and maintaining our 3,000 miles of roads and 600 bridges throughout the county. As state and federal governments struggle with funding, St. Louis County has taken the lead on this issue.

**CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:**

County government has already taken care of funding for maintenance of roads and bridges in the County—the transportation sales tax, instituted last year. Almost \$40 million in projects were delivered over 2015-16. There are \$25 million in proposed projects for 2017-18. General obligation bonds have been secured at low interest rates utilizing transportation tax as a funding source for debt repayment. Each year, additional money is forwarded to these and new projects via amendment to the County's 5-year Capital Improvement Plan and considered routine.

The County Public Works Department, in my opinion, is adequately staffed and projects are adequately funded with help from the transportation tax and lucrative federal funding. In fact, the federal funding mechanisms involving MN-DOT are so entrenched that an individual citizen's attempt to challenge the process—as I did with the 4<sup>th</sup> Street Heritage Park dissection and the removal of over 200 boulevard trees, was futile. One must consider also, that road byway or intersection enlargements, bridge and culvert replacements and other multimodal projects are allowed by reduction in greenspace and sometimes, natural environment features. Thousands of acres of wetlands have been lost to transportation infrastructure needs.

I would like to see more transportation monies going toward maintenance and quality work done the first time. We must personally accept responsibility for safe and defensive driving habits. Engineers should not be considering how far one has to turn their necks at an intersection or how to recover after running off the road in project design.

**QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:**

**What should be done to ensure that every citizen has the ability to vote and have their vote counted without undue barriers?**

I have always been a strong advocate of making voting as easy and accessible as possible. I worked hard to oppose Voter ID on the ballot in 2012 and will continue to advocate for voting rights.

**CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:**

If you are a legal citizen of St. Louis County, you deserve to be prepared to show some kind of documentation to prove that is the case the first time you vote in your city, town or precinct; early or absentee voters included. This is why all should be encouraged to become citizens of the USA and to take up permanent residence. Once your name and residence is on file, subsequent voting at the proper location should be carried out as it is now with no proof of identity needed. Voting equipment must be accurate and tested to assure it. Thank goodness for the people that volunteer their time to register voters and secure each person's ability to vote if the rules are followed. Thank goodness for those that offer rides and help to those who need it to get to the polls and carry out their civic duty.

**QUESTION 7: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:**

**How can county government, in collaboration with other levels of government; help address racial and cultural divides in public safety?**

We can continue support for training of Sherriff's staff on cultural sensitivity issues. We also should work to recruit more minorities into open positions within the Sheriff's department.

**CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:**

Over one third of our County budget goes toward police protection and law enforcement; more than to health and human services, to transportation or to land management. Yet, what were the additional law enforcement positions (besides jailors) recently tacked on to 20 badly needed child protection worker increases? Putting officers in rural schools and then into recreational enforcement when school is out for the summer. To me, this is a blatant example of misuse of authority and the squandering of long-standing budget priority to this entity. According to recent surveys, a greater percentage of people feel safe. Much crime cannot be prevented by police officer number increases. Instead, law enforcement ends up seeking out crime where none exists and unfortunately, some citizens are more targeted than others. My upmost respect goes out to those who put their lives on the line for the welfare of County citizens. But crime prevention starts at home. We must build up the quality of life of families, children and the communities out of a sense of respect, boundaries for behavior and presence to each other—not fear of law enforcement personnel.

**QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:**

**Please explain why you do or do not think that it is important to reduce the role of money in American elections.**

There should be a limit on how much you can raise and spend in an election. The US Supreme Court's decision on Citizens United was a mistake in my opinion.

**CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:**

Special interests (ie. Money) in American elections is rampant and contrary to the essence of government of, by and for the people. On the other hand, special interests are usually businesses backing candidates who then expect their elected officials to vote according to that business related preference. Bribing of government officials is rampant as well. This is against all rules of decency, even in the sports arena. Public officials should have the general public's best interest in their voting records and personal lifestyles.

As with the huge influence individual purchasing power has on consumer marketing (County) voters have the power to nullify the copious, bad money used for political mud slinging toward candidates running against each other. We know these expensive and monotonously run advertisements are thin on facts and thick on attention-grabbing gimmicks. *Don't buy into it!* Let political bad money be wasted on back and forth finger-pointing but make sure you vote with integrity. Research the candidates and make your own vote count towards decency in government. The League of Women Voters offers this profile as a source of candidate research as well as our local newspaper.

**QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE PATRICK BOYLE:**

**In your opinion, what are the most important challenges facing our region and how do you propose to address these challenges?**

Out of home placement (child foster care) is the largest challenge facing the county. St. Louis County spends \$14.5 million per year through property taxes on this annually (accounting for over 10% of the money raised by property tax), and it continues to increase every year. We need to work to find ways to end the escalation of out of home placement. The county needs to address the epidemic of opiate/heroin addiction. Services for mental health must continue to be a priority as well. I was proud to recently vote to increase staffing for 20 dedicated children's social workers.

**CANDIDATE LINDA ROSS SELLNER:**

Certainly the repercussions of illegal opioid drug use to families and children is not only a challenge but at epidemic proportions in St. Louis County. Lack of staffing have been partly addressed since the County social workers demonstrated for it but my gut instinct is to ask *why* are so many residents abusing drugs? Those able to prescribe opioid medications must be held accountable and documentation should be rigorous. If ease of access is restrained, we're still left with too many County resident's lack of hope and in need of temporary escape. At the crux of the matter is quality of life. How do we improve that for all? Face our discrimination and seek to let it go. Recognize our unique talents, perhaps through career counseling and aptitude testing. Free or reduced tuition for training and education and strive for more time spent outdoors.