

COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 3

QUESTION 1:

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

CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

I grew up one of six children. My dad was a union bricklayer and my mom a homemaker until becoming a speech pathologist. In a big family, I learned early about hard work and getting along with people to reach common goals. Those simple values continue to guide me in my work, life, community and family. I am running for county commissioner because I love my home in West Duluth, my community of so many distinct and beautiful neighborhoods and because it is these simple values that will make progress for us all. I am the Executive Director for First Witness Child Advocacy Center and have 25 years' experience working on issues of public safety, and public health and human services. I have effectively delivered quality services on a very tight budget. I have streamlined processes to reduce waste and have a greater impact in the community. I have built successful collaborations and changed policies to improve people's lives. I am running for County Commissioner because I will bring new experience and insight to the board that is needed to find solutions to the problems we currently face in the county.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 2:

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

CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

The government needs to set policy that allows people to make a decent living for the work they provide to society. This includes increasing the minimum wage and supporting earned sick and safe time. We need to regulate the safety nets available to people in poverty and they need to be strengthened and made more effective. We need to evaluate our current services and make changes that will help lift people into the middle class, providing real pathways to living wage jobs and practical support such as child care.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

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

1. Invest in infrastructure. Honor project labor agreements and prevailing wage agreements. This includes closing loopholes for tax deferred business investments.
2. Partner with education, major industries, business leaders and the community to create a workforce ready to take on the growing industries in our region.
3. Ensure that all contracted service providers through the county are providing a living wage and benefits for their employees. Currently, some of these employees need government assistance to supplement their earnings.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

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

The county can utilize the land it manages to maintain important watersheds and eco-systems where needed. The county can continue to implement important environmental friendly practices in building and renovating county owned structures, including using renewable energy sources. The county can continue to implement and strengthen standards for private septic systems and also support services and programs that address solid waste and recycling, aquatic invasive species and nonpoint source pollution. I would not weaken any current environmental policy.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

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

With over 3,000 miles of roads and 600 bridges, this is an important question. Infrastructure is needed to support a strong economy and is a core service of government, requiring investment and maintenance. In 2015, the County Board passed a half cent sales tax dedicated to roads, bridges and infrastructure. This tax generated \$14.5 million in the first year, putting people to work on many projects. I support this dedicated tax. I also support working with the other counties who are requesting a statewide gas tax to support roads.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

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

I believe that voting is at the heart of our democracy. I am surprised and dismayed when I see elected government officials attempting to limit voting rights. I feel as an elected official it is my responsibility to engage voters in issues that affect them and encourage their participation in all aspects of our democracy. We have many practices in Minnesota that support the rights and ability of voters, such as same day registration, early voting, voting by proxy and absentee voting as well as neighbors vouching for each other to vote. I support maintaining all of these practices and ensuring that regardless of when or how you vote, each vote is counted.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 7: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

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

We need to recognize that we do have an overrepresentation of people of color in our criminal justice system and an underrepresentation of people of color in our criminal justice response. I think the county needs to work not only with other levels of government, but also community members and the workers within our public safety system to address this issue. We need to understand how and why we see this trend and commit to common goals as to how best to make effective change. I think we need to be open to new ideas and solutions and rise above rhetoric and misunderstanding. This will take a long term commitment of some resources and time.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

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

I think it is important to limit the role of money in elections, because the cost of running is becoming very prohibitive to many people. We need more candidates and a greater variety of candidates to ensure true representation of the people. I believe that public financing for candidates would increase discussion of issues and positions, limiting mudslinging and misrepresentation of facts.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE BETH OLSON:

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

The number one challenge facing our region is the need for living wage jobs with benefits. The county can invest in needed infrastructure, and partner with entities through workforce development to ensure we have industries and a workforce that align with one another. We can use county managed land to support economic development where appropriate. Our region is also experiencing a huge challenge with opiate addiction and an influx of heroin. Residents have voiced their concerns throughout the district as I've gone door to door talking with them. We now have a greater need for child protective services and out of home placements for children. This tears at the fabric of our families and communities, overburdens our systems and services, and drives up costs. I would ask all departments in the county to work collaboratively with local health and non-profit entities and other units of government to combine resources and develop new and creative strategies to address this issue. We need to make sure we are not duplicating services, but instead, are working together with unique perspectives and resources to achieve common goals. I believe the west side of Duluth is especially challenged by being left out or left behind. Each neighborhood has unique possibilities, strengths and needs. We need to recognize each neighborhood for their individuality and the role they have in a greater vision for the region. I will be a strong voice for the west side as decisions are made, recognizing the importance of each neighborhood.

CANDIDATE JAY FOSLE: Did not respond.