



Commitments from Candidates for Carbon County Commissioner District #3*



Norma Shultz



Bill Bullock

*Candidate statements are published as they are as submitted to our office. We do not make corrections of any kind or verify statements for truth or fact.

1. What do you believe to be the role of a County Commissioner and what makes you an ideal candidate?



The responsibility the county voters entrust in their commissioners tests every capacity of a person's compassion, intellect and character. As a political subdivision of the state, county governments are more directly impacted by the significant challenges facing the state than any other level of government. The role of a County Commissioner is to serve all the citizens of the county. This involves day-to-day management of county responsibilities and proactively addressing issues facing the county. A County Commissioner needs to make timely community-based decisions and provide responsible and transparent funds management. The role of government is to protect and maintain individual rights; not grow government.

Budgets/Finance:

As commissioner, I would consider how best to leverage the county's revenues, debts, financial predictions, negotiated union contracts and expenditures to meet our obligations and position us to meet our long-term goals. I believe in living within our means at all times-I do **NOT** believe in we collected it, we must spend it.

There is never enough money to fund every good idea or project and likewise, property taxes are never low enough; especially, to help the contributing residents of our county with lower or fixed incomes: such as the elderly; veterans; those with disabilities or other medical conditions or infirmities; and public service employees, such as teachers and police officers. Budgets are always the most difficult aspect of a commissioner's job.

Often, it is a delicate balance to provide planning and adequate funding to projects to comply with mandates and to guide the organization into the next stage of growth and development; but that is what I did for over 50 years. I will strive to always have our county live within our means and always look for ways to return money to the pockets of our residents.

As a representative of the people, I will be everywhere and anywhere you need me. I live by the quote, "If you want to fix something, start by being there!" You will have access to me and I will be in the field with you because I know walking in your shoes will help me understand your needs and is what it takes to represent you best.



I believe the role of a County Commissioner is to implement policy and manage the budget and funding for County Government. I believe this role resides within a board, and the

ability to work with fellow Commissioners for the most desirable outcome for our constituents, is essential. Coupled with this, is the ability to lead and innovate, in order to perpetuate our community.

I have done this on countless occasions. Whether it be the floods of 2022, the wildfires of 2021, Covid of 2020, or the passing of fellow commissioners, such as the untimely death of Commissioners Grewell and DeArmond.

2. What are areas where you can see the County making the most improvements if you are re-elected commissioner?



INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATION WHICH EMBODIES TRANSPARENCY AND COLLABORATION

Infrastructure:

There is no doubt that roads and bridges are a major area where improvement needs to be made. It doesn't matter if you are a class 1,2 or 3 road, the county is not doing a good enough job of maintaining, grading and snow removal. My priority will be to interview and work with the district's road and bridge team and find out if the heart of the issue is in lack of staffing, lack of available overtime, lack of proper equipment, lack of the proper maintenance to maintain the equipment we have or combination thereof. Nothing is harder on a good employee then wanting to get the job done right and not be given functioning equipment. If the issues stem from lack of financial resources to pay for the staff or equipment that is needed to do a good job, then this needs to be clearly communicated with the community so decisions on how to either reallocate resources or raise additional revenue to bridge the gap can be had so we can move forward with a successful strategy of having proper road maintenance for which everyone can be proud.

Communication:

I believe one of my most important jobs is to represent the voice and will of the people when dealing with the state, federal or other county/city governments. Most of the work of a successful elected official is in communication, cooperation and trust. I earned the trust of organizations and people I served. I delivered results and I plan on doing the same for the

people of Carbon County.

I feel strongly that the easiest improvement the county can make is to its communication style, customer service and transparency.

Community members should not feel ignored and all input should be appreciated. It is the job of county staff to not only help within their department areas, but to also offer helpful information from other departments.

Case in point, I had a complete loss of my home, in the 2022 flood. Like many others in my same predicament, I needed to find temporary shelter after living in a tent for over six weeks post flood. Eventually, I purchased a fifth wheel and needed to get it hooked up to a working septic system. I applied for the permit and after weeks of not hearing back, I followed-up with the county only to be told that septic permits could not be issued without a building permit. Yet, when I applied for a septic permit, no one instructed me to walk down the hall to the Clerk and Recorder's Office to get a building permit; even though I didn't need a building permit because I was not "building" a new home, simply hooking up my fifth wheel to a septic. In my opinion that is an area ready for improvement. Those issuing the septic permits should automatically be guiding residents through the process and making sure we applied for a building permit, regardless of whether we needed to build anything (either that or not require a building permit for a septic permit if all that is needed is to hook up a fifth wheel to the septic system).

As commissioners, we cannot do all the work alone. We need the input, wisdom and frustrations from all community members

to ensure we are doing the right thing and doing it well. This is not a job that is done alone by three people in Red Lodge. This is a community where we all roll up our sleeves and take constructive criticism and great ideas and work together to implement them to the best of our ability. Everyone deserves the right to be heard and the commissioners need to know everything the community says is worth hearing and it is our job as commissioners to work with the community to solve problems.

Collaboration:

With over 50 years' experience working in the service industry, especially in nursing homes, I interacted with all types of organizations and people from: unions; schools; government agencies; non-profits and community members. I did everything from sweeping floors to writing and evaluating grant applications.

I've dealt with and resolved difficult and sensitive personnel issues. These included simple misconduct to spousal abuse, addictions, and child protection issues. My experiences provide a framework and knowledge base to address our county-wide issues as they concern the very serious side of county work. I am the candidate that embodies the working class and who values collaboration.

Transparency:

With the level of cynicism in government today, actively promoting the public trust is essential. In all aspects, I will endeavor to ensure the people of Carbon County are both included and heard. This also means making county government as transparent and accountable as possible. I stand firm that as a commissioner, I am here to serve the people of our county.



I can see the most improvements being brought out of infrastructure necessity. What I mean by that, is that even as I am writing this, we are taking a more pro-active role in assessing and experimenting with alternative road treatments to get more longevity out of our surfaces, while trying to keep costs down. With that, we have acquired traffic counters to more effectively gauge where we are allocating resources.

With all of this, and I hope it resonates with folks, is simply this: we have a lot more people moving here. Our development is on a frequency unlike we have ever seen. There are a lot of folks moving here to Carbon County, for all of the reasons we as residents already know.

I also see improvements to our own County infrastructure. In order to serve our growing population, we have to begin to adapt. For example, figuring out a solution for inmate

incarceration. What we are doing now isn't sustainable. Driving inmates all over the state to be housed, isn't doing us a lot of good. It is expensive, and is not solving the issue. We have limited funds to provide the services necessary for our community, and we have to stretch those funds as far as we can to get the most benefit.

4. What are your top policy proposals aimed at affordable housing in Carbon County?



Growth and Development:

Carbon County is facing significant growth that will provide opportunities for new businesses, increased housing developments, expanded road systems, and others. I would support and proposed specific planning, zoning and other land use regulations based on the will of the people of Carbon County.

Our small county does not have the resources to house all who are in need of permanent housing because at least 25% of our housing is either in a short term rental pool market or is secondary housing for temporary residents and

this includes apartment rentals.

After taking the important first step of reviewing regulations to reduce barriers to development, such as, streamlined the development approvals process to encourage the creation of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on existing lots, Carbon County may find that additional incentives are required to encourage the creation of lower-cost homes. I would promote a System Development Charge waiver, which exempts newly-built or converted ADUs from the infrastructure hook-up fees for three years or extend the waiver permanently on the condition that ADUs are not used for short-term rental housing for a minimum period of

15 years. I would like to see Carbon County make ADUs legal in all single-family-zoned areas as of right. Thus, no public hearings or special approvals are required to build them.

Furthermore, I think Carbon County could use more mobile home parks where the mobile home owner owns his lot, not just the mobile home. Mobile homes are a great starter home that makes home ownership more affordable and allows our county to retain locals born and raised here that are entry and mid-level employees that would otherwise be priced out of the market and forced to move away from the community they know and love.



It is no mystery that affordable housing is a critical issue in our County, and our State. We at the County aren't immune from this either. We are on our 14th potential employee, that, although qualified and potentially an excellent employee, they never even showed up for lack of being able to find a place to live. We are at such a need right now,

affordable housing, in my opinion needs to be implemented on a very large and intense scale.

That being said, we have taken the steps necessary to have access to our funds that were rolled out in HB 819. We have literally just today, indicated our CRO to receive these monies from the State of Montana. My hope is that this will help to stand up more affordable housing for our County. I don't see this as a

'give away', but a means to stand up affordable housing and have it perpetuated. That, coupled with private enterprise stepping up to provide affordable housing that fits the needs of our community and its employees. With this we have received \$25,000 grant to revise our subdivision/growth policy.

5. If the County received \$5 million dollars in funding to be used for any purpose, what would you do with it and why?



PUBLIC SAFETY AND LONG TERM CARE

Public Safety:

Carbon County needs to improve public safety, address drug trafficking through and in our county, as well as, mental health and addiction issues. Not having a jail makes addressing public safety more difficult as our Justice of the Peace has to weigh the costs and difficulties of incarcerating offenders versus releasing them. Carbon County believes in enforcing the law, but the county has spoken, via a ballot measure, that they didn't want a jail built in our county. \$5 million isn't enough to build a jail anyway, but it might be enough to enter into a joint cooperative agreement with our neighboring counties that are without a jail and pool resources to get a jail built for all our use in their county.

Long Term Care:

Invest it to bring back long-term elder care to

Carbon County. The Willows needs to be re-opened and we need to partner with private businesses to ensure their success in successfully offering care to the elderly of our community. I would couple this with housing for home health care workers. I feel it is very important for people to age in the communities in which they were born or in which they chose to move or retire.

I find it heartbreaking that as people age and can no longer live alone, they are forced to move to foreign communities where they have no interest, meaning places they don't know and where they have no family or support networks. Aging is a delicate process and as we age we do not adapt to change as easily. This additional emotional stress on a person who is already going through the grieving process of loss of their independence, is exacerbated by the stress and feelings of loneliness and distress that compounds their mental state when they have to be uprooted from their community.

Additionally, the communities lose the value these older members of our society contribute to the cohesiveness of their personal families and communities. Friends and families are divided, often by hours drives as these elderly residents often are relocated to communities great distances away.

We need to value every life and, as a community, support our families and friends regardless of their physical or mental abilities, ages, socio-economic status, political views, race etc. Community contains "unity" and we need to step out of our comfort zones and realize our community thrives when we help each other thrive.

If elected I promise to be compassionate, transparent and willing to listen to all. Let's work together to figure out the best way to provide for the growth of our community and the people that make our community so amazing.



Ironically, in a lot of ways this has already happened. The combined total, including grants for ARPA, LATCF, and CARES, Carbon County has received just over \$5 million in funds over the last 4 years.

What we have done with this is:

- A. Support and improve water and sewer infrastructure for all of the unincorporated towns (Roberts, Edgar, Belfry). These funds went to improve water services in these towns, improve sewer services in these towns, and get them to a point where they are functioning and providing the necessary water and sewage treatment for folks to live there. The reason for this is fairly simple. These are hard infrastructure improvements that are expensive, and slowly occurring. They can wait for a grant cycle, however, sometimes these systems fail, due to the simple reason of being 60-80 years old. When they fail, they need to be fixed, immediately. These monies went to these unincorporated areas
- B. We also put forward monies towards all of the Senior Centers in the County. Again, there is no revenue pots available to ensure these facilities carry forward. We bought a new floor in Fromberg, a new parking lot for Red Lodge, HVAC and a remodel in Bridger, HVAC in Joliet, a lift assist in Boyd, food storage for all, and implemented a Farm to table food program, utilizing Carbon County producers for their meal programs. These are hard inputs that will carry these facilities for decades to come.
- C. Money towards radio repeaters and communication infrastructure for law enforcement, Fire and EMS.
- D. We obligated monies to all 3 libraries in the County for HVAC, internet, computer and overall building improvements. Again, there just aren't funding mechanisms out there for this purpose.
- E. Lastly, we at the County, sold the property we had acquired for the proposed detention

because they needed repairs, and there really weren't any other financing options out there at the time.

facility. With that, we made an additional \$50,000 from the sale. Using this amount of money and the available CAREs, ARPA, LATCF monies, we acquired property in Red Lodge, the county seat, for future consolidation of County services, to get us through the next 75-100 years. This would fix long lingering issues with access and facilities that we face every day.

**If we were to receive \$5 million in revenues on top of this, in my opinion, we would finalize our vision of a County Services building, with the inclusion of a 'detention/mental health wing', which would help diffuse the issue of incarcerating individuals. This alternative would be a benefit to our citizenry and court system, and law enforcement. While doing that, it would free up our current facilities to finalize our transition to a one stop location for all County services. We would sell what we have vacated, freeing up space and making it available for enterprising individuals to explore or implement more affordable housing within the private sector. 🏠