

The Columbian

Clark County Council chair questionnaire

The Clark County Council chair has the same voting power as the four other members of the council. What power does the Clark County Council chair position really have and how do you intend to use it?

As it pertains to the Home Rule Charter and the Constitution of the State of Washington, the responsibility of the Chair is to:

Respect the separation of powers-

Section 1.5 Separation of Powers and Cooperation of Branches

On January 1, 2015, the effective date of this charter, the legislative and executive powers shall be separated into two (2) branches of government. Each branch is to dutifully fulfill its responsibilities and shall not extend its authority into the other branch, as defined in this charter.

Section 2.2 Organization

A. The council member nominated and elected countywide shall be the chair of the council.

B. The chair shall preside over council meetings and ensure the orderly and efficient conduct of council meetings. The chair, or his or her designee, will be the county's spokesperson to articulate council policies, vision, strategies and plans; represent the county before the governor, state legislature and other state and federal agencies; meet and greet important visitors; supervise constituent response processes for the council as a whole; and serve as the county's lead representative at dedications, ceremonial activities and other public events.

C. The council shall annually elect one (1) of its members as vice-chair, who shall act in the absence of the chair.

D. The chair of the council shall serve on all boards and commissions that require representation by two (2) or more council members. Otherwise, the council shall vote to appoint its members to boards and commissions. E. A majority of the council shall constitute a quorum at all meetings.

F. The council shall take action by and pursuant to the vote of at least a majority of its members, except where a different vote is required by this charter. A two-thirds majority of members equals four (4) votes.

G. Except as otherwise provided in this charter, the council shall be responsible for its organization and rules of conduct for business.

As Chair, I will work with the council to set a vision and mission, create regular meeting agendas and hold the meetings in accordance of the Charter requirements, and work with the State, and Local jurisdictions to form a more cohesive and cooperative operation. As well as represent the County to all delegations and sit on a majority of the County Advisory Commissions.

What is the single biggest challenge facing the county?

Lack of effective Leadership.

This in turn leads to a failure in the County's ability to address the truly pressing issues:

Affordable Housing/Homelessness

Living Wage Jobs

Responsible Growth and Development

Aging in Place

Balanced Budgets (rainy day fund) Budget Shortfalls

Transportation and Infrastructure

Animal Control/Code Enforcement along with providing other necessary services to our community.

Clark County is experiencing a structural deficit where revenues outpace expenditures. This is happening at a time when the county is experiencing rapid growth and an increased demand for services. What are your specific plans to address the situation?

A structural deficit is where the expenditures are actually outpacing the revenues over an extended period of time rather than from a singular event e.g., a natural disaster, or an individual budgetary year shortfall. We are facing a structural deficit purely due to many years of poor leadership on the Clark county Commission and later the Clark county Council. I think (former County Manager) Mark McCauley

had a good plan in 2016 that would have addressed much of the budget shortfall, unfortunately the Council did not support it. We need to allow the regular 1% increase allowed by the voters and lift the moratorium on cannabis sales in unincorporated Clark county. Clark county has the highest tax revenue income stream from cannabis sales in the entire state of Washington and the County is missing out on all of it. I am sure the cities don't want to lose that revenue, but as the county provides services to the cities through the benefit of scale, we have the ability to do more with that revenue to benefit all of the citizens of Clark county.

Please explain your party affiliation (or lack of affiliation) and what your political philosophy means for how you would approach local government.

I affiliate as a Democrat. My family going back 4 generations were blue collar Union Democrats. We earned our income by the sweat of our brow and the strength in our backs. We also lived off the land and were hunters, fishermen/women, and if you go back to my grandfather, fur trappers. I was a Proud Teamster delivery driver for many years as was my father before me. My mother was a Nurse for over 30 years before she passed away. I am currently an executive board member and the (Western) Washington Vice Chair of the Washington State Progressive Caucus, we work to improve the lives for the citizens and workers of Washington State by bringing forward knowledge of, and challenging inequality and inequity in all forms.

When is it appropriate for the county government to increase taxes or fees on citizens?

Taxes should be increased by the vote of the people or where designated by the Washington State Constitution. Fee increases should be increased in accordance with inflation and limited to the cost of living increase for that particular area.

If you could make one change to the state's Growth Management Act, which requires Clark County to plan for future growth, what would it be?

It would definitely be the MRL designation via overlays. This essentially allows the DNR or property owners with a mining resource land designation to expand their land via overlays onto private property owner's lands. The insistence that the State's and/or private entity's mining resources under the ground are more

important than the property owner's rights on corresponding parcels is frankly appalling.

What changes would you make to the Clark County home rule charter, if any?

I support the Home Rule Charter as is. If I were to make two changes, I would consider making the County Manager an elected office with requirements for experience and education, and I would require those in the partisan races to claim a specific party affiliation pertaining to their voting record or filing status. For example: Marc Boldt claims "non-party" but voted for Trump, opposes a woman's right to choose, opposes lifting the moratorium on cannabis, marched with Jaime Herrera Beutler in the Ridgefield Parade and had been a Republican PCO for almost 20 years, Republican State Representative for 10 years, and Republican County Commissioner for 10 years. I find the claim of "non-party" to be disingenuous at best and dishonestly manipulative at worst.

The Clark County Jail has become overcrowded and outmoded for modern correctional practices. How should the county address the problem?

First, we need to see what options and solutions can be exploited before incarceration, e.g., treatment, mental health services, basic living services, behavioral treatment services. Reducing sentencing on non-violent drug related and petty crimes. Then, after reducing our incarceration levels, we continue the great work we have been doing on re-entry to society after time has been served and focus on reducing recidivism. Finally, we remodel the Jail, utilize the JWC, and plan to build a new facility as a last resort.

Clark County is experiencing a housing shortage and an increase with homelessness. What can the county do to address the situation?

Clark county and the surrounding cities should work with the Building Industry Association and others to develop a plan to increase the number of multi-family residences inside the Urban Growth Boundaries. I am talking about attractive, green, and sustainable efficient and modern flats equipped with solar panels on top and walking gardens instead of traditional landscaping.

Homelessness is also an important issue facing Clark county. There a lot of contributing factors to homelessness, mental health, substance abuse, lack of living wage jobs. The county needs to continue to work with Columbia River Mental Health Services to address the increase in demand for mental health and substance abuse services. We need to continue to support Cascadia Tech and

Work-source to improve skills and wage opportunities, and we need to continue to support apprenticeships. In the meantime, we need to improve and invest in local shelters and foodbanks to support current families in need.

Should the county lift its ban on recreational marijuana? If so, what should be done with the tax revenue?

Yes. Revenue could be put towards the looming budget shortfall, drug and alcohol treatment and enforcement, homelessness, and improving services to the citizens of Clark County. Both Council members Boldt and Quiring mentioned that they oppose lifting the moratorium on cannabis sales due to the fact that "The county is charged by the state to provide drug and alcohol treatment.", if that is their argument then I suppose they also favor a moratorium on alcohol sales? The fact is, that access to cannabis reduces dependency from more addictive pharmaceutical drugs and reduces the underlying criminal infrastructure that comes with the black market and illegal drug trade. Alcoholism is a far more destructive societal issue that we should be focusing our efforts on.