

We have identified the following ten questions which we would like the candidates to submit written responses for posting on our website- ([CKNA](#) and [BDNA](#)). We have selected the first question that we will ask each candidate to respond directly to at the forum. In addition, candidates should select one other question from this list that they would like to address at the forum.

At the forum, after responding to the preset questions, we will open to questions from the chat.

Please respond with your written answers by Sunday, Apr 3, 2022 . Please also identify which question from the list that you would like to address in person at the forum.

Let me know if any of this isn't clear and thanks again for participating

Category	Question
All candidates must respond to this question.	
Houseless Services	
1	<p>The idea for this forum came out of an experience that the Creston parent community encountered while supporting a school family faced with houselessness in the fall of 2021. This parent and child were #200 on the waitlist for shelter space. When they asked where they should sleep while they were waiting, they were told by the non-profit managing the homeless shelter (and contracted by the county) that they could provide a tent in the interim. We all know that the housing situation in Multnomah County is desperate, but it was an absolute shock to our community that the county was offering tents to single parents and their children rather than a safe shelter for the night. In the end, school parents raised funds to pay for motel shelter until a longer-term solution was found.</p> <p>It has been reported that there is a tension between the city and county in the preferred approach to housing policy with the county favoring a policy of prioritizing long-term permanent housing and the city pushing for short-term housing and shelters. How do you believe that this tension has contributed to the situation where single mothers cannot find temporary shelter in Multnomah County? What will be your approach to working with the City to ensure that every child in Multnomah County has access to a safe bed for the night?</p>
Candidates- respond in writing to the following questions and choose one that you would like to address at the forum.	
Housing	
2	<p>Due to cost of living increases and other external pressures in Multnomah Co., many families are being displaced. This disproportionately impacts native people and communities of color. What sort of programs or policies do you support that would equitably address this problem?</p>
Behavioral Health Services	
3	<p>Multnomah County is building an expansive Behavioral Health Resource Center in</p>

	Downtown Portland. What do you see as the barriers to accessing resources at the center to residents who live in Eastern Multnomah County? What is your plan for helping overcome those obstacles so that more residents can be served by the new resource center?
Social Services	
4	The county manages the administration of SNAP and TANF benefits. These benefits are lifelines to many families struggling to make ends meet, however, when a family has a question about their benefits or spots an error and needs to contact the county, the phone wait can be over two hours. As a result, many county residents are left confused and with unanswered questions about their benefits. How would you work to update the customer service at DHS so that clients are able to manage their benefits without spending entire days trying to work through the system?
Elections	
5	Local elections are managed by the elections office which is a division of Multnomah County. Increasingly across the country, the validity and integrity of our elections has been challenged and election officials are being harassed. In parts of our country, state legislators are passing laws that restrict access to voting. What risk do you see for both the integrity and the accessibility of elections in Multnomah County? And what policies do you support to ensure safe access to free and fair elections in Multnomah County.
Bridges	
6	<p>Would you consider introducing bridge tolls on city bridges to pay for addiction services or other underfunded services in the county?</p> <p>The Oregon Constitution limits the way fees assessed on driving and operating a motor vehicle can be spent. The Oregon Constitution (Article IX, Section 3a) specifies that revenues collected from the use or operation of motor vehicles is spent on roadway projects, which could include construction or reconstruction of travel lanes, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities or transit improvements in or along the roadway. Current interpretation says that tolling falls into this constitutionally limited category. I've been supportive of removing this limitation on how transportation revenues can be spent, and were this limitation to go away, I would be open to considering such a proposal. That said, our bridges are in tremendous need of maintenance and need to be seismically improved, and tolling may be a source for revenue for that critical infrastructure work.</p>
Public Safety	
7	Multnomah county residents and small business owners have become regular victims of \ crimes such as car theft, vandalism, break-ins and petty theft. What would be your approach as chair to addressing the issue of crime in Multnomah County?
General	

8	The position of county commissioner and county chair more specifically can be seen as a stepping stone in a political career. This can lead to office holders choosing strategic, politically-wise decisions over making difficult, sometimes unpopular decisions. What does success in this position look like to you?
Animal services- This question was submitted by a fifth grade class at Creston Elementary school	
9	I love that so many animals are rescued and cared for in my community. How will you work to make sure that animals continue to be cared for in Multnomah County?

Oversight	
10	In December 2021, WW reported on the delay in issuing Emergency Housing Vouchers to Multnomah County Residents. Home Forward, a Multnomah County Partner agency, is responsible for issuing the vouchers. How do you plan to improve oversight and transparency to ensure that residents have access to services and benefits they are eligible for?

Creston Community Forum Questionnaire
 Jessica Vega Pederson For Multnomah County Chair

- 1. It has been reported that there is a tension between the city and county in the preferred approach to housing policy with the county favoring a policy of prioritizing long-term permanent housing and the city pushing for short-term housing and shelters. How do you believe that this tension has contributed to the situation where single mothers cannot find temporary shelter in Multnomah County? What will be your approach to working with the City to ensure that every child in Multnomah County has access to a safe bed for the night?**

Framing the solution to our houselessness crisis as either shelter or housing is a false choice. We won't solve our houselessness problem by pitting shelter and housing against each other. This crisis requires a comprehensive response that focuses on keeping people housed, helping people get off our streets, and ensuring access to the critical support services people need to remain housed. That means using rental assistance, rapid rehousing, and housing vouchers to keep people from becoming houseless. It means expanding our shelter capacity with traditional shelters, pod villages, safe rest & parking sites, and motel shelters that offer increased flexibility and privacy to parents and families. And it means scaling up our investments in behavioral health services and permanent supportive housing to keep those who require additional support housed.

- 2. Due to cost of living increases and other external pressures in Multnomah Co., many families are being displaced. This disproportionately impacts native people and communities of color. What sort of programs or policies do you support that would equitably address this problem?**

We need to build more housing. The leading cause of displacement is a lack of affordable housing, which is driven by a fundamental shortage in the amount of housing we're constructing and is also the root-source of our housing and homelessness crisis. As Multnomah County Chair, I will partner with the City of Portland, Oregon Housing and Community Services, and Home Forward - the three agencies that are most directly responsible for housing policy - to ensure we're more rapidly deploying housing vouchers, particularly to Black, Latinx, Indigenous, other communities of color and marginalized communities; and to identify and address key barriers to constructing more

housing.

- 3. Multnomah County is building an expansive Behavioral Health Resource Center in downtown Portland. What do you see as the barriers to accessing resources at the center to residents who live in Eastern Multnomah County? What is your plan for helping overcome those obstacles so that more residents can be served by the new resource center?**

The Behavioral Health Resource Center will be a tremendous asset to our entire community, providing a space where individuals can receive respite care, housing, and additional support as needed, but it is absolutely essential that we not let that be our only investment in behavioral health services across Multnomah County. East Portland and east Multnomah County have historically experienced a dearth of investment in critical community resources, and while the County has worked to address that by increasing investments in those areas, particularly Gresham and Rockwood, much more work needs to be done. As Chair I will increase funding for mobile behavioral health resource teams that can respond quickly to behavioral health crises across the County and, if necessary, provide transportation to the Behavioral Health Resource Center. Beyond that, we need to increase investments in adequate facilities located in east Portland and east Multnomah County, and as a Chair who lives east of 122nd and who has experienced the impacts of the lack of services directly, that will be one of my top priorities.

- 4. The county manages the administration of SNAP and TANF benefits. These benefits are lifelines to many families struggling to make ends meet, however, when a family has a question about their benefits or spots an error and needs to contact the county, the phone wait can be over two hours. As a result, many county residents are left confused and with unanswered questions about their benefits. How would you work to update the customer service at DHS so that clients are able to manage their benefits without spending entire days trying to work through the system?**

Long wait times are a persistent challenge for Multnomah County and most governments, and as Chair I will identify and address the root causes of these challenges. Fundamentally, this is an issue of capacity: we have a huge need for these services in our community, and Multnomah County, like many employers, is struggling to find and hire enough staff to do this critical work. That's why making Multnomah County a model employer, one that attracts top candidates to fill these vacancies, will be one of my top priorities as Chair. Additionally, it is still too difficult to access many resources online, though we've made good progress on that front since the onset of the pandemic. As Chair I'll work internally and with our contracted providers to make more services accessible virtually, and to expand access to broadband within low-income communities that still struggle to access online resources.

- 5. Local elections are managed by the elections office which is a division of Multnomah County. Increasingly across the country, the validity and integrity of our elections has been challenged and election officials are being harassed. In parts of our country, state legislators are passing laws that restrict access to voting. What risk do you see for both the integrity and the accessibility of elections in Multnomah County? And what policies do you support to ensure safe access to free and fair elections in Multnomah County.**

I am incredibly proud of the work that Multnomah County Elections does every election cycle, and I truly believe that there is no better Elections team in the country. I have no concerns about the integrity and security of our local elections, but we must recognize that that is not the case across the Country. I have spoken out against efforts to restrict access to the ballot and corrupt our election processes in other areas of the country. That being said, there is still work that needs to be done to make voting more accessible for County residents, particularly those who do not speak English and those who are immigrants or refugees. As Chair I will seek new opportunities to create partnerships with the organizations that work closest with those communities. I also believe that Multnomah County should create a public campaign financing program similar to that established by the City of Portland, to ensure that anyone with sufficient community support can seek election to public office and further protect against the influence of money in our politics.

6. Would you consider introducing bridge tolls on city bridges to pay for addiction services or other underfunded services in the county?

While I am open to exploring the idea of new sources of funding for addiction services, it's important to note that the Oregon Constitution limits the way fees assessed on driving and operating a motor vehicle can be spent. The Oregon Constitution (Article IX, Section 3a) specifies that revenues collected from the use or operation of motor vehicles is spent on roadway projects, which could include construction or reconstruction of travel lanes, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities or transit improvements in or along the roadway. Current interpretation says that tolling falls into this constitutionally limited category. I've been supportive of removing this limitation on how transportation revenues can be spent, and were this limitation to go away, I would be open to such a proposal. That said, our bridges are in tremendous need of maintenance and need to be seismically improved, and tolling may be a source of revenue for that critical infrastructure work.

7. Multnomah county residents and small business owners have become regular victims of crimes such as car theft, vandalism, break-ins and petty theft. What would be your approach as chair to addressing the issue of crime in Multnomah County?

Over the past two years, our community has seen a startling increase in crime, particularly gun violence. There have been nearly 400 shootings in 2022 so far in the City of Portland, and we are on-track to exceed the number of shootings we saw last year, when we broke existing records for gun violence.

As commissioner, I've invested in immediate and long term solutions to this crisis. I passed an amendment to fund community-based organizations who provide critical mentorship, after-school programs, and other services proven to prevent violence. As a state representative, I fought for requiring background checks for firearm transfers.

We must redouble our investments in gun violence intervention, mentorship, and behavioral health services. Poverty also contributes to violence, and I support expanding the county's role in addressing economic mobility. Finally, we need to ensure the District Attorney has the resources needed to investigate and prosecute gun crimes and other violent crimes.

As County Chair I will work closely with all our partners in the public safety and justice systems, including Portland and the other Multnomah County cities, to direct resources to combat gun violence in the areas most impacted by it and ensure that the resources we are each spending to address the issue are being leveraged effectively to support our community organization partners doing critical work in our communities and put our departments to work in coordination with each other.

I believe that criminal justice must emphasize justice, and our current systems of policing and incarceration are not just. Law enforcement is a necessary component of our overall public safety system, but our current systems have not earned the trust of many of our communities, particularly Black communities which have long endured a brutal system that is imbued with systemic racism. In addition, we've delegated far too many duties and expectations to our law enforcement system, while underfunding education, behavioral health, and housing programs that address the root causes of many of the challenges we face.

I believe we must fundamentally reshape how we preserve community safety and enforce laws, starting by establishing trust between police and the communities they serve. We must also shift our resources to fund violence intervention and prevention programs like Cure Violence, Advance Peace, and other models that emphasize mentorship, violence intervention, and access to services. Such models have proven to be successful in reducing community violence. We must also increase investments in programs that address the root causes of violence and criminal activity, like Preschool for All, which I developed and championed.

8. The position of county commissioner and county chair more specifically can be seen as a stepping stone in a political career. This can lead to office holders choosing strategic, politically-wise decisions over making difficult, sometimes unpopular decisions. What does success in this position look like to you?

I was trying to think of a county commissioner or chair who had moved into a different office from the county recently, and except for Ted Wheeler being appointed as State Treasurer after the death of Ben Westlund, I couldn't think of any. Regardless, I view success in my position as county commissioner or any future role as county chair in the same way as I viewed success in my elected role of state representative: To use my position to create systemic and structural change that empowers historically and currently marginalized communities and makes bold progress in fighting climate change, furthering educational and economic opportunity and extending health care and housing for all.

9. I love that so many animals are rescued and cared for in my community. How will you work to make sure that animals continue to be cared for in Multnomah County?

Multnomah County Animal Services does amazing work, and visiting the shelter in Troutdale is one of my favorite jobs as a county commissioner! I adopted one of my cats as a kitten from the shelter, like so many other families have done in our community. As Chair I'll ensure they continue to do their great work with the resources they need to be successful, and I'll also explore the possibility of investing in a new animal shelter to replace the very old and outdated shelter we currently use.

10. In December 2021, WW reported on the delay in issuing Emergency Housing Vouchers to Multnomah County Residents. Home Forward, a Multnomah County Partner agency, is responsible for issuing the vouchers. How do you plan to improve oversight and transparency to ensure that residents have access to services and benefits they are eligible for?

We need everyone charged with addressing our homelessness crisis to act with the sense of urgency our community expects and this dire situation requires. Home Forward is a separate agency from Multnomah County that we do not have direct oversight over. Their board members are appointed by the Mayor of Portland and approved by the Portland City Council. That's why as Chair I'll convene monthly meetings of the leaders of the key agencies addressing housing and homelessness to pour over data, review what's working and what's not, make key decisions, and hold one another accountable. Solving this crisis will take all of us working together with the same level of urgency and a higher level of coordination than we've seen over the last few years. I'm the only candidate in this race with the record and experience necessary to take on and accomplish that monumental task.