

Lori Steggman | Candidate for Multnomah County Chair

1. If elected, what should voters expect to see you deliver in one year and in four years with respect to our crisis of homelessness?

Year 1:

Create a 24/7, first responder drop off site.

Create an Office of Reentry Services to prevent people from churning through our criminal justice system.

Create an Economic Development & Workforce Stability Department to connect people to jobs and career training.

Create a team to diagnose people who are experiencing mental health issues to divert them out of the criminal justice system, similar to Portland Street Response

Create a master lease pilot program to incentivize property owners and nonprofits to house more people.

Increase transitional and supportive housing programs like My Father's House and Salvation Army's Bridgeway of Hope.

Improve transparency and communication of our investments and progress. Use evidence based data, like the Built for Zero platform. Implement a dashboard showing where investments are being made including shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and affordable housing units coming online. And reporting of metrics: from outreach teams, sanitation services and hygiene stations, etc.

Improve collaboration and partnerships with the business community, the faith-based community, nonprofits, neighborhood associations, property managers, and anyone and everyone who has something to offer that will result in bringing people in, off of the streets.

Utilize funding from the Construction Diversity Equity Fund that I co-sponsored that sets aside 1% of the County's capital projects for pre-apprenticeships and workforce support for women and communities of color. The new Behavioral Health Resource Center will be the first to utilize this new legislation.

Within 4 years:

Leverage the \$100,000 grant from the Gates Foundation I won to work on economic recovery and resiliency.

Invest in the Vance Project in Gresham to redevelop nearly 90 acres into housing, a workforce center, greenspace, and the relocation of animal services.

Adopt drug policy similar to Portugal's by treating possession or use of drugs as a health issue not a crime and mandate medical treatment for those individuals. And penalize and jail drug dealers.

Expand the Behavioral Health Resource Center model to all four quadrants of the County which will serve as a low-barrier day space, mental health shelter, and transitional housing site for houseless individuals living with behavioral health issues.

2. As costs of County services increase, the County must be intentional in how we generate revenue.

a) With respect to taxation, how will you approach who to tax and who to protect?

What are your thoughts around a luxury tax or sales tax with exemptions for certain goods/services that are identified for basic services (food, clothing, etc)?

We need a complete overhaul of our tax system. While Measure 50 lowered our property taxes and slowed its rate of acceleration it also sacrificed equity. Because property taxes are disconnected from property values, some property owners pay a disproportionate amount compared to their neighbors.

I support a sales tax with exemptions for basic goods.

Wealth inequalities have become even more stark during the pandemic, the chair needs to understand the impacts to businesses and all of our most vulnerable communities.

b) What is one place the county could generate revenue without increasing taxes?

Improve efficiencies in our contracting/delivery of services. We are piloting a software program with East County partners to decrease administrative burdens in our departments and streamline processes to do outreach and process applications, contracts, payment, and reporting. By freeing up more time for departments, it also enables people to more easily find and access services, while our departments can focus on best practices and increase investments into our communities.

3. What kind of percentage changes in the County's Health and Human Services budget would you recommend to improve to an adequate level of service on an ongoing basis? Where will this funding come from?

As the modernization of the workplace has changed our personal lives, so should the way we build efficiencies within our departments. Taking some of the capacity load off our employees allows them to focus their time and energy on the quality of programming we offer our communities. I will work to streamline the repetitive, administrative functions in our departments to allow us to move more resources into the community and increase the accuracy of our investments.

4. There has been criticism of COVID safety in MultCo jails. What would you do as County Chair to improve safety (COVID and otherwise) in the county's corrections facilities?

Our flu protocol has been utilized and we were able to build upon that approach during COVID to maintain safety for incarcerated residents.

Those protocols flex the population and spacing of our jail population. We have revised our jail management plan to keep high risk offenders in jail while moving low risk offenders into diversion or case management caseload. I will increase resources in our Department of Community Justice to allow for more jail reform and to use that limited space more effectively.

5. What new ideas do you have for improving collaboration between the County and other local governments, particularly the cities and school districts?

I am the only commissioner who has worked collaboratively with the five city governments of Portland, Gresham, Fairview, Troutdale, Wood Village and the unincorporated areas which is no easy task considering the rural and urban areas that exist in my district, as well as four school districts. Those relationships have resulted in a \$40 million investment in homeless services, plans for an East County Homeless Service...