

Jessica Vega Pederson | 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?

As Chair, tackling our homelessness crisis will be my top priority. I've put forward a clear plan with short, medium and long term objectives:

In the short term, I will:

- Expand our shelter system;
- Deploy alternative shelter models such as alternative "pod" shelters, safe rest villages and RV camping sites;
- Access empty apartment units to create more housing;
- Acquire motels that can be quickly converted into shelters;
- Support community-based solutions like Kenton Women's Village;
- Ensure robust community support, outreach & responsiveness in areas with shelters;
- Clean up debris and garbage associated with encampments;
- Bring online a new database to track our successes and identify areas for improvement;
- Increase accountability by convening monthly meetings with key decision makers across jurisdictions to track our progress, hold ourselves and our partners accountable, and share our progress; and
- Maintain our focus on racial equity, understanding that many communities are more likely to become homeless and struggle to obtain services.

In the medium term, I will:

- Acquire vacant or partially occupied properties - either through purchase, lease or other tools - to address the homelessness crisis;
- Expand critical wrap-around services for those struggling with mental health and addiction issues, so that they can find stability and stay housed; and
- Work with partners to create more affordable housing;

In the long term, we must dramatically ramp up our supply of affordable housing, which is at the root of our region's woes. We simply haven't built enough housing at all price points, and this is escalating the prices and causing tremendous hardship and homelessness.

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

The benefits of our economic growth have not been equally shared - a small subset of wealthy individuals have reaped most of the economic gains. I will keep that in mind, as I have in the

past, when considering any tax proposals. The County can generate additional revenue by strengthening our businesses, who pay our business income tax. Addressing homelessness, gun violence, and bringing our community back together would be very helpful for our local businesses, county revenue, and for our overall community.

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?

The Department of County Human Services provides many critical resources to residents across Multnomah County. I'm proud of the work they do every day, and we know that there are many areas where we need to reduce caseloads and wait times, simplify processes, and better integrate our systems to make accessing all of the resources available easier. As Chair, I will prioritize working with our employees, our service provider partners, and community members to identify and address areas where we can accomplish these goals. That being said, this year's budget for DCHS was over \$337 million, and of that only \$58.8 million came from the County's General Fund, meaning that the remainder comes from the state and federal government or dedicated taxes such as Preschool for All. So answering this question with a clear percentage is difficult because of the wide array of funding streams.

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?

We must ensure that those in our custody and working in our jails are protected against COVID-19 and other transmissible diseases. I've spoken with Corrections leadership about the reported incidents where staff have not observed all COVID safety precautions, and as Chair I will continue to have frank and direct conversations with Corrections and the Sheriff's Office about the importance of their adherence to these safety measures.

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

As Chair, I will convene monthly meetings of the key decision makers addressing homelessness, including the cities and school districts, to make key decisions, review data, and hold one another accountable. I will likewise hold continuous consultations with community leaders to identify and proactively address challenges facing our community. Multnomah County needs a Chair who has proven their ability to convene a wide range of stakeholders with diverse opinions to create meaningful change, and I am the only candidate in this race with that track record at the state and local levels. As a state legislator I helped marshal a diverse coalition to enact paid sick leave, raise the minimum wage, and end Oregon's reliance on coal; and as a county commissioner I brought together stakeholders from the Portland Business Alliance to the Democratic Socialists to craft Preschool for All - a groundbreaking program that will ensure every three and four year old in Multnomah County can access high-quality preschool. We're facing huge challenges - homelessness, gun violence, addiction, and systemic racism. Addressing all of these challenges requires coordination between different levels of government, the...