

2024 Laramie County Commissioner Candidate Forum Questions

1. What do you see as the county's budget priorities in the coming years and how does the library fit into those priorities?

My goal would be to develop a Mission Statement and a Strategic Plan to develop the budgetary priorities for the county. As of right now, there is no clear-cut plans or direction for the county and that makes it difficult to make informed decisions about the needs of Laramie County.

The County Library receives 2 Mills for operations of the library. Currently, I feel the library is being run in a way that meets the needs of Laramie County.

2. Concerning property taxes, how do you balance the sentiment that property taxes should be reduced with the priority and obligation of county government to maintain vital community resources that provide amenities and resources we expect to maintain or improve our quality of life in Laramie County?

County Commissioners have no authority to reduce or raise property taxes. I do feel that it should not be a "one size fits all" approach. It will take some time for the legislature to decide on how to best handle this situation.

3. What is your understanding of the county funds provided for the library's operation budget and would you plan on making any changes to this funding over the next four years?

The County Library receives 2 Mills for operations of the library. I do not plan on making any changes to the funding over the next 4 years.

4. What education and/or career experience do you have that qualifies you to perform the job of County Commissioner?

I grew up in Cheyenne and after graduating from East High School I attended Laramie County Community College. After 2 years at LCCC I transferred to the University of Wyoming. I graduated from UW with a degree in Agriculture Business. My Great-Great Grandfather, Benjamin Franklin Ketcham, was a trailblazer which led him to pioneer in the great territory of Wyoming. In 1867, The Ketcham family had the honor of having the 1st deeded homestead in Laramie County with the ranch still being held within our family. My Wyoming roots run deep on my mother's side of the family my Great-Grandfather, Jess Boner (whom I am named after), pioneered in Converse County (currently Niobrara County) in 1903. I am currently employed by the State of Wyoming as the State Budget Administrator for the State Budget Department. I am also finishing my second term as a Laramie County Community College Trustee where I served as Chairman of the Board in 2019-2021. I also have been a Cheyenne Frontier Days volunteer for the Parades Committee for 24 years and have been a Lead Assistant Chairman for the last 10 years.

During the COVID crisis I was Chairman of the LCCC Board of Trustees and had to make hard decisions about how to move LCCC forward. Through that process LCCC is in a better position to be successful, now and in the future. Something that sets me apart is that I was a part of building the 2030 LCCC Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is the guide that will direct LCCC to achieve the

goals we deemed most important for the vitality of the college. I believe that Laramie County needs a Strategic Plan. I believe that we need a clear plan when it comes for the future of our county. This is one of many areas that has given me the ability to implement and develop a mission statement for the county to facilitate planning for the future of Laramie County--capital projects, budgeting, and established infrastructure. My experience with budgets, the legislative process, along with my true Wyoming values, afford me the knowledge to help keep Laramie County moving forward.

5. By Wyoming State Statute, the County Commissioners appoint the five members of the governing board for the Library.
 - i. How would you ensure that the appointed citizens will enhance and advance the strength of the Library? *By making sure that we appoint the most qualified individual that has background information that will help them to be an asset to LCLS and to the citizens of Laramie County.*
 - ii. What is your perception of the type of oversight and authority county commissioners should have over these board members once they are appointed? *The appointed individual should adhere to the library policies and procedures that are already in place. As the appointing body, we should make sure that this is being done.*
 - iii. What additional responsibilities, if any, do County Commissioners have in relationship to the operation and administration of the Library? *To establish and maintain healthy working relationships with all stakeholders of the library including board members, employees, and Laramie County citizens. Another responsibility is to promote the library and all it does and offers to our community.*
6. What do you see as the role and purpose of the library for the citizens of Laramie County? Please include in your answer any services you have noticed or used as a member of the public. *I see the role and purpose of the library to offer a free place that people can go and gain knowledge and information. I see it as a place where people can go learn new things and participate in activities, they may not otherwise be able to do. Something at the library that my family and I loved when my boys were younger was children's section of the library and all the interactive activities and classes that are offered.*
7. What is your stance on intellectual freedom and the role of libraries in ensuring access to diverse viewpoints and information, particularly on controversial topics? Do you approach this differently for youth versus adult materials? *I do not believe in banning books in a public library. Youth library cards are tied to their parents, and it is ultimately the parents' decision about what they are comfortable with their children reading or being exposed to.*
8. Have you visited the library branches or bookmobile? Please include in your answer your thoughts on what services we offer the rural patrons of Laramie County. *Yes! When my father was County Commissioner, we supported the Bookmobile and the other Laramie County public libraries as often as we could in the rural areas of our county. Recently, the*

Bookmobile has gone to my wife's school, and I have helped support her students gaining access to library cards and books. I feel that the Bookmobile is a wonderful asset to our community. It allows people of all ages to gain access to books, knowledge, and materials they may otherwise not have access to.

9. What can the county commissioners do to ensure healthy communication and cooperation with other governmental entities such as city councils, town councils, mayors, and state government? As a representative of Laramie County, it is their responsibility to maintain positive, healthy relationships with all other governmental entities. I feel that the commissioners are leaders in the community and need to make sure that they are representing all their constituents, stakeholders, and all the departments under their direction. They need to be a clear and open communicator, reach out to all stakeholders and all entities to ensure that what is being done is in the best interested of Laramie County and its citizens.