

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?

With the projected boom in population here in Laramie County due to the Sentinel Missel Project and the large Data Centers that are set to come, meeting increased demands for services, and having the infrastructure to support those demands will continue to be among our biggest challenges. I feel the library will become a bigger asset to our community with disseminating information and resources to the increasing population.

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?

Many of the people in Laramie County feel their taxes should be reduced because their tax dollars are being put in a rainy day or savings account. Educating them about the costs associated with the amenities, services and maintaining resources that improve our quality of life in Laramie County is key to clarifying this concept. I do believe that in order to cultivate a healthy society, we need to continue to provide these amenities and services and property taxes are where we receive the majority of the monies, we use for this.

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?

While I am not fully certain of the funding structure of the operations budget for the library, I believe the County funds that are allocated to the library are 2 mils levy which is approximately 2.9 % of the property tax collection and equates to about \$5.7 million dollars. I would not foresee any changes to the funding of the library over the next four years.

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

Working for both government and private enterprises throughout my employment careers has given me a solid understanding of how these sectors operate. I've gained valuable knowledge managing budgets, facilities and hundreds of people over the years all the while raising a family and living a life that I value and cherish very much. I'm a hard charging worker that gets things done. I've been President and Vice President elect for the Wyoming Association of Fairs as well as served as President of the Arc of Laramie County for six terms. I served on the faculty and staff welfare committee and the educational services staff council while employed at Laramie County community college. I coached youth soccer for the Cheyenne soccer association for ten years. I have also been on officer teams for 4-h and FFA organizations and served on my church's board of trustees to mention a few.

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?
 - ii. What is your perception of the type of oversight and authority county commissioners should have over these board members once they are appointed?
 - iii. What additional responsibilities, if any, do County Commissioners have in relationship to the operation and administration of the Library?

I believe the initial selection of the appointed board member would be a huge step in ensuring they would enhance and strengthen the library. I would interview and evaluate prospective appointees choosing the candidate based on their background of knowledge of library roles and functions. I would also base my decision on how responsible that person is and if the selection is representative of the entire county.

My perception of the type of oversight and authority county commissioners should have over these board members once they are appointed is as such:

The control, use and disposition of the county library fund is entrusted to the county library board of directors which shall budget and expend the fund for the maintenance, operation and promotion of the county library and county library system in order to carry out the informational, educational, cultural and recreational role of the county library.

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.

The role of our Laramie County Library is providing an access point of information for our community. It is a place that fosters education and literacy that shapes us as a society. It is a gathering place of knowledge and ideas that give us a view of where we came from, where we are and where we are heading. It gives us public access to technology that may not be available to everyone. It is a source of recreation and enjoyment. It is a place for individual and social development and promotes culture. It preserves cultural heritage, and this is one of the services that I am familiar with, The Genealogy and Family History Collection is a valuable service to not only me but to our community altogether, a record of past generations that is nicely organized and easily accessible to all of us.

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?

Intellectual freedom is, by definition, the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all viewpoints without restriction. It provides free access to all representations of ideas through which all sides of an issue or topic may be explored. Therefore, I believe libraries have the role of providing everyone with free and public access to all unrestricted information. I also feel libraries are one of the few places left that are accessible for me to seek and validate viewpoints and information, especially in this day and age of slanted views and misinformation. Libraries should never remove materials or deny access to resources on the grounds of personal bias or prejudice or because the materials may be viewed as controversial or objectionable. Doing so violates the principles of intellectual freedom and is in opposition to the Library Bill of Rights.

I feel, it is the parents' right and obligation to monitor the content of the information that their children are accessing. Not only for the information held within the walls of the library, but on social media platforms, television and even the music to which they are exposed. I believe parents should be involved in educating their children on how and what information they are seeking, to me this practice prepares them for adult life. Therefore my stance on intellectual freedom stays the same for youth as well as everyone else.

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.

While I have not visited the bookmobile in several years or had the opportunity of visiting the Burns branch, I have visited the Pine Bluffs Branch a couple of times. As far as services the Pine Bluffs branch is offering, one that is near and dear to me, and my personal favorite is the Summertime Storytime Sessions for kids. I remember, as a kid attending story time at a library branch that was south of the Central viaduct during summer vacation and how much I learned and enjoyed the time I spent there. I especially like the library having Kyle Groves perform an adventure in reading magic show performance on occasion. This is a wonderful way of encouraging reading while having fun.

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?

Healthy and effective communication is important for cooperation. County Commissioners as well as other government entities need to recognize that effective communication is a key aspect in developing a bond of trust and cooperation between each other. Commissioners can also encourage and emphasize the importance of recognizing and respecting each other's responsibilities, vision, and goals. Laramie County Commissioners can be the forerunners in establishing open and honest lines of communication, which is a huge step in promoting a healthy working relationship between mayors, city councils, town councils, county, and state governments. Communication and cooperation are the foundation for conflict resolution, promoting understanding and diffusing tension. I believe our County Commissioners can lead the way in laying down the groundwork of productive and effective collaboration efforts for any situations of joint leadership if necessary.