

2024 COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRES

In June 2024, we released a questionnaire to all candidates. We added the bold font to their responses emphasize the most important aspects of their views. Otherwise, their responses are unedited.

*We have released questionnaires for contested primary races and will distribute questionnaires for the general race after the primary election. **We have set ambitious housing goals in the Comprehensive Plan, but we do not yet have enough stable funding to achieve these goals. How would you obtain permanent and dedicated revenue for safe, secure and affordable homes for our community members—especially the most vulnerable and lowest-income among us?***

Len Carlman: No public revenue streams are permanent, but some are more stable than others. **\$80 million for five different 2022 SPET-approved publicly subsidized housing efforts is a good start;** with another \$85 million for other SPET projects also approved in 2022, and \$22 million/year in SPET revenue, the 6th penny SPET excise tax is booked until about 2029. A real estate transfer tax, half devoted to affordable housing and half to conservation measures, could materially help. **We need the state legislature to enable it. I've supported a transfer tax on high end Teton County real estate transactions since about 1990 when I lobbied for it in Cheyenne.** We can get transfer tax enabling legislation passed in Cheyenne if grassroots citizens team up with local officials and like-minded citizens from other parts of Wyoming to lobby state legislators with the powerful real-life stories about our housing cost structure, our community's needs, the success of already-achieved publicly funded affordable housing developments, and the lived experiences of hard-working residents.

Natalia Macker: **I will continue to support SPET funding for housing.** Two potential dedicated funding streams will require collaboration and work with the state. The first is funding generated through mitigation. Teton County's

mitigation program may potentially be at risk from the state legislature. **I plan to continue working on the program itself and will fight to prevent mitigation from being removed from the toolbox.** New funding sources that require state authorization/legislation include a **real estate transfer tax** designated for affordable housing, a **new sales tax option**, or **recalibrating the lodging tax** to dedicate a portion to affordable housing. **I would support all of these and work to get them passed**, recognizing that the legislature has not looked favorably on new taxes recently. Another program that I would be interested in exploring but do not know the extent of the legal framework we would need is a **payment-in-lieu-of-taxes/tax abatement program**. While this is not dedicated funding for housing, it is an incentive to create affordable housing for the lowest-income. [Here is an example in TN](#) and [here is one in MD](#). While I have not had a chance to vet this broadly, I would anticipate we may need some enabling legislation, and this may be best suited to Town if we could figure out a way to enable it on existing rental properties. **We could also explore if there is a way of establishing long-term dedicated housing funding via conservation.** The federal government makes payments in lieu of taxes to local governments based on acreage of federal land to offset the lost revenue to local governments. Teton County is receiving ~\$2.4M in the current fiscal year. I'd like to think creatively to see if there is a way of generating revenue from permanently conserved, private land in the county that supports affordable housing.

Jim Rooks: Despite three decades of good work on community housing, a “reliable funding source” has yet to be achieved. The Comp Plans suggests we do the following regarding direct funding for housing; 5.4.S.5: Explore a sales tax, property tax, or other reliable funding source to allow for the creation of deed-restricted workforce housing. Continue attempts to institute a real estate transfer tax. 5.4.S.6: Continue to pursue State/Federal grants to fund the development of workforce housing. **We absolutely must continue building a state-wide coalition to ratify a real estate transfer tax.** The County and Town must also unite to lobby for and secure funding from our

state and federal partners to build truly affordable deed restricted housing. I feel highly qualified to help with these State/Federal endeavors and genuinely optimistic that the political tides are changing in favor of affordable housing. **Sales tax, special excise and use taxes, have been and should continue to be a primary funding tool for housing, but the \$80 million approved via the 2022 SPET isn't nearly enough.** More permanent revenue from existing sales, property and use taxes should be used to fund housing, especially by Teton County. Suffice it to say that Teton County has lagged behind the Town of Jackson on many elements of housing. The County, which has far greater revenues (and reserves) than the Town, should be leading the effort to fund housing. In short, we have permanent funding sources, but it is up to our elected bodies to “dedicate” such funding towards community housing. **Next, we should fully utilize a less regressive tax paid for almost entirely by visitors, the Lodging Tax.** A new +2% lodging tax should be approved by the voters and allocated exclusively to affordable community housing by the electeds. **I am also in strong support of the Community Foundation's new housing initiatives,** which show tremendous promise to better capture and utilize philanthropic funds.

What is your vision for the Virginian neighborhood? Do you support the current recommendation to move forward with Pennrose as the developer? Do you support the new Affordable category (120-160% MFI) incorporated into these plans? Do you support the original breakdown of Affordable and Workforce homes proposed by Pennrose?

Len Carlman: Shelter JH board member Kelsey Yarzab wrote a persuasive letter to the editor, published on page 5A in the Wednesday, June 26 2024 edition of the Jackson Hole News and Guide. I'm grateful our community had two development proposals to consider, and **I favor moving ahead with the Pennrose team.** I'm close friends with a young local couple with good careers who fall exactly in the 120% to 160% AMI gap that the Pennrose proposal would partly serve. My friends just bought a fixer-upper in Alpine,

so they won't benefit from this development, but I'm glad others eventually will.

Natalia Macker: **I am broadly supportive of the direction we are headed with the Virginian neighborhood. My primary disappointment is that affordable space for childcare won't be included in the development. I support Pennrose as the developer and the new Affordable category,** especially given what we learned in the housing nexus study. I am eager to participate in the ongoing conversation and negotiation around issues (including unit type and mix, greenscaping, options for financing) that staff was directed to undertake and look forward to having this back on our agenda soon to discuss updates. Ultimately, my vision is for a vibrant neighborhood of people living, playing and thriving in community together. It is a fantastic location, and I support the desire to create a livable neighborhood.

Jim Rooks: My vision for the "Virg" has always been focused on building a high quality and inclusive neighborhood in the heart of Jackson, with as many truly affordable mixed housing types as possible. As my professional efforts and voting record clearly demonstrate, **I was a strong advocate for the purchase of the Virginian RV Park and helped negotiate the \$28.5 million price** (versus other elected's who were willing to pay over \$30 million). **I was active during the RFP process and led the fight to remove all commercial space and free market units from the project.** While I would have preferred a competitive dual negotiation with both Pennrose and Elmington to secure the best possible project for our community, the County voted otherwise and housing staff suggested we focus our efforts on Pennrose. Not wanting to risk a costly delay in the project over such a procedural issue, I voted to negotiate with Pennrose alone. **I do support limited and strategic use of the 120-160% MFI category, but not at current levels.** I also do not support the current 75%/25% balance between workforce/affordable homes as originally proposed. **I recently introduced 12 key negotiation points with Pennrose, with the first being "more affordable units and less workforce units."** While the workforce tool has

proven effective, our most recent housing study shows that we now have more workforce units than desired and not nearly enough affordable units. I will continue to push for effective negotiations with the developer, which I have found is not necessarily a strength of government. While I am focused on securing detailed contracts and starting construction as soon as possible, we must be bold and strategic in this final phase of a supremely important project to ensure we end up with the best possible community housing neighborhood.

What would your response be to community members who expressed opposition to incorporating deed-restricted homes into their neighborhoods? How do you communicate the importance of housing locals locally?

Len Carlman: Wilson Park, and parts of Wilson Meadows. The residents there are my friends and neighbors. For the past 24 years, my wife, our kids and I have welcomed our neighbors, whether from the affordable lots or not, to walk their dogs on our property and splash in our small pond. Our lives are better because of that. If there's a new affordable housing development in an older, established neighborhood, **I'd suggest the longer-term residents host an annual community potluck picnic with some nice music so people can meet each other and find common ground.** The importance of locally available affordable housing is not an open question. **If the June 2024 Teton Pass closure hasn't convinced the current generation of Jackson Hole people about the importance of "housing locals locally," nothing ever will.** But the case for affordable housing in Teton County was already understood and accepted before Highway 22 over Teton Pass failed. **Proof: \$80 million in 2022 SPET funding for all five proposed projects says voters are putting their, and our visitors', money where our values are.**

Natalia Macker: I do my best to really listen to people to try to find common ground to move forward from. This is different in every instance. My experience has told me that the opposition is not necessarily to the deed restriction itself but usually the increased density that is part of the project that will be deed restricted. **I think stories are the strongest way of reaching people as it can humanize everyone and work to move past**

assumptions or stereotypes. I also think providing good, factual information can be helpful. If the concern is that property values in a neighborhood will decline if there is affordable housing nearby, providing data or examples that show this didn't happen can be persuasive. If the concern is that parking will be disrupted, showing the details of what will actually be required and the management plan can be helpful. At the end of the day, everyone cannot be persuaded, but **everyone should be heard and treated with respect.** I think communicating the extreme housing conditions that families face – as well as the unimaginable cost – can paint the picture of why locals need housing. Beyond that, I think it is a focus on quality of life – both for individuals and families and for the quality of the life of the community at large. Housing locals locally means that we have people investing in community life with pride – not just “serving” the community. The goal is to have a thriving community, and this isn't a zero sum game. Ensuring there are safe, secure, and affordable homes in our community doesn't reduce or take away anything from someone who already has housing. It just means more people have the opportunity the springs from stable, affordable housing. Not having to worry about housing means people can focus on their education or career, they can address health needs that may have been postponed, they can spend more time with their children, or they can take the leap to start a business. **Stable housing grows opportunity.**

Jim Rooks: NIMBY-ism is alive and well in Jackson Hole! I have this exact debate with people on a regular basis, although very few people openly admit to opposing deed-restricted homes. Instead, **I have noticed that anti-housing folks commonly cloak their opposition to community housing under a wide range of seemingly valid concerns, ranging from traffic and parking to wildlife and sewer capacity.** However, underneath these legitimate sounding concerns oftentimes lies a selfish, misanthropic and prejudicial ideology. If a community member has honest concerns about deed restricted housing I am more than happy to listen, share ideas and debate facts. **However, I have little patience for outright NIMBY-ism and will**

respectfully call out “anti-housing” opinions for what they are, short sighted, unrealistic and wrong. There is a small, yet vocal anti-housing faction in Teton County, who I do not think can be convinced of the importance of housing locals locally. But, I have several communication strategies and talking points that have proven effective for those with open minds. First, **I confront what I call the “lock the gate behind me” philosophy**, or the opinion that select people in our valley get to unilaterally decide who gets to live here. As a proud member of a local family with 120 years of local history, I rarely use what we call the “Local’s Card.” But, when it comes to housing I lay down my card and suggest that **no single person or small group gets to determine who lives and works in our community**. Our community has a positive history of welcoming and including “others” and I let them know that exclusionary practices aren’t what we are truly about. Next, **I share the core idea that an investment in affordable housing is actually an investment towards a healthy, diverse and thriving community**. Finally, **I confront the raw economics**, as the idea that hard working folks can afford million dollar condos and multi-million dollar homes is absurd.

It will take unprecedented and strategic partnerships to move the housing needle meaningfully. Which entities (besides other housing-specific organizations) should be working together to address housing insecurity? In practical terms, how would you use the levers of local government to help build collaborative partnerships among stakeholders in this region?

Len Carlman: The ShelterJH website suggests we convene a Housing Council. I like that idea. I do not like the current conflict between various local housing groups. **We will make more forward progress by working together, against tough odds and inherently big obstacles**, than we will if groups waste their time being mad at each other. Rather than post a roster of entities that might need to collaborate in favor of housing security, **I’d work up an outline for a meaningful and useful Housing Council**, and find a trusted convening team, such as the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole

and Town and County governments, to invite participation and see who self-selects.

Natalia Macker: **Our business community needs to be a partner in housing.** I think we have perhaps taken a position of business will take care of itself and/or businesses need to pay mitigation. I do think many businesses are doing what they can to take care of themselves and that perhaps there is brainpower or resources we can leverage there. Contained in this is also our housing finance sector. **The ongoing mortgage rate crisis is creating a new spectrum of inaccessibility, and I think we need to be creative so that we can still have movement within the housing market.** As mentioned earlier, **I am very curious how we might merge affordable housing efforts and conservation champions.** This would include our federal land management partners, private land owners, conservation NGOs, and the broader community. Wildlife and conservation are generally seen as our community's first goal, and again, I don't think this has to be a zero sum game and we should look for alignment. With both business and conservation, **local government is in a position to be a convener to bring various parties to the table.** The resulting potential action may then be in the hands of local government but could also be actions for other sectors to take. I also want us to be sure we are working outside Teton County on the policy and advocacy side as different areas of our state face challenges, perhaps opening the door for more innovative action at the state level down the line. This is something I think we can do as local government and as individual elected officials. **I will continue to remain engaged with the Wyoming County Commissioners Association** so that we can help lead dialogue with other counties on this issue as well as through other relationships and positions I hold.

Jim Rooks: The lack of affordable and stable housing in Teton County threatens virtually every aspect of our community. In turn, **every segment of our community should be working to address housing insecurity.** An outstanding recent example of this type of broadened approach is the **Community Foundation's Housing Solutions Initiative.** Wendy

Martinez and staff are doing an excellent job of providing services and support that compliment existing housing efforts. Other local and regional entities should join the effort, such as the **Chamber of Commerce, Travel & Tourism Board and religious organizations/churches**. Each and every home makes a difference, such as those provided by the **Senior Center, Good Samaritan Mission and Community Safety Network**. While not every organization can, or should, be expected to fund and construct housing, **we can all contribute to improving our community housing in some fashion, such as One 22's rental assistance program**. I think the Town and County should host quarterly housing forums to foster increased learning, networking and partnerships between individuals, non-profits, businesses and industries, such as the restaurant, lodging, recreation and construction sectors. The Jackson/Teton County Housing Authority should receive increased funding and staffing to host such workshops to help other groups learn how to fund and build housing in an efficient and effective manner. Local governments could also provide further incentives to promote non-governmental housing efforts. Finally, **local governments should hold other governmental agencies to a higher level of accountability for helping to house employees**, including the national parks, wildlife refuge, and forest service. Current housing efforts by Lower Valley Energy and Wyoming Game & Fish are prime examples of how smaller scale efforts help to incrementally improve our housing situation. Finally, regional, state and federal project partnerships should be continually explored.

Town of Jackson elected officials have recently pushed the pause button on commercial development in certain town zones so we have time to recalibrate our land development regulations (LDRs) to incentivize the development we want to see in our community. What changes would you make to LDRs, zoning regulations, or other local government systems to house more locals locally?

Len Carlman: With respect to commercially zoned property, **I would tighten controls over new development and redevelopment, particularly hotel re/development**. I highlight hotels because they generate a lot of low paying jobs where the jobholders who are not directly housed by the hotel itself

can't afford to live in Teton County. That means they commute from Teton Valley or Alpine, and that means we get more and more roadway congestion. It's long been true that the number of jobs in Teton County outnumbers the people who live here. Our community is already out of balance between locally housed workers and commuters; it will take a concerted effort for many years to fix that.

Natalia Macker:

1. **We need to make progress on the immediate actions of the water quality management plan**, including identified updates to the LDRs and working on sewer infrastructure and capacity. This will help us identify and streamline adding density or approving projects so that water quality and wastewater don't have to be a limiter in any way. Delayed approvals can drive up costs or result in declined development because of uncertainty or unanswered questions regarding water impacts. Our concentrated attention on the plan actions will hopefully begin to resolve outstanding concerns so that water quality can't be used as a reason to say no.

2. **I think we should consider what role mobile homes and tiny homes can play in our future zoning in the county.**

3. As Northern South Park moves forward and we address wastewater issues, **I am curious to see where the community is on Hog Island** and whether some modest density could be successful there.

4. I don't yet have a solution to proposed, but **I want to keep working on the housing preservation front** to try to find a way to make that more desirable and functional.

5. I want to work on our rules and regulations, and cross check what we have there with our efforts to **support housing for seniors and folks with disabilities.**

6. As we move forward with planning at **Stilson**, I think we will be faced with some challenging questions about changing uses there, including opportunities to consider affordable housing.

7. I think there is the potential to **consider another large update, or possibly the initiation of a comprehensive plan process** towards the end of the next 4-year term of commissioners.

Jim Rooks: In 2016, the Town changed multiple LDR's with the laudable goal of incentivizing workforce housing, such as eliminating maximum building size, increased building heights, created a 2:1 workforce bonus, and created high density "by-right" zones. The goal was workforce housing and it worked, but there were unintentional consequences. Heavily capitalized investment companies swept in to aggregate lots, develop and monetize what we now know to be an overly-incentivized system. I pushed for and voted in favor of the recent moratorium, but have always asked, "A moratorium to accomplish what?" Below are my answers:

-**Reinstate a maximum building size (40,000 square feet) for all commercial developments**, including caps on the number of lots (square footage) that can ground a single commercial project.

-Eliminate "by-right" zones and **transition back to a new and improved Planned Use Development system**.

-**Reduce the 2:1 workforce housing bonus to a 1:1 square footage incentive system, but exclusively for "Capital A" affordable units**, that are administered by the Jackson/Teton County Housing Authority. This ratio would need to be revisited on an annual basis to ensure it is achieving the actual building of affordable units.

-**Include environmental (water and wildlife protections) and traffic/infrastructure guidelines** into the approval process for all large commercial developments.

-Update our housing mitigation fees and system.

As important, **below is what I do not wish to see happen as a result of the moratorium**:

-Elimination of current housing incentives

-Disincentives for public, public-private and private housing projects that happen to be “large buildings,” versus targeted regulations for commercial/retail, high end luxury lodging, short term rentals and condominium projects.

-A complete and total overhaul of the Comprehensive Plan that would take several years and challenge the funding and building of affordable community housing.