

## Candidate Questions

[Becky Van Hout](#) · Tuesday, January 16, 2018

1. Have you ever managed any employees and if so how many?

I have managed employees for 23 years. As a Captain/Undersheriff in Summit County, I managed 72 FTE's. As the Undersheriff in Park County, I managed 56 FTE's.

2. What do you feel the minimum requirements are to be a Park County Deputy and what should be the base rate for that position?

I believe that the minimum requirements to be a Park County Deputy would include meeting State mandates that require law enforcement applicants to have successfully passed an accredited law enforcement training academy, physical, and psychological evaluation. The Sheriff's Office should additionally require a High School Diploma or GED. Applicants would be required to pass a standardized written test, followed by an oral board. Successful applicants would typically receive a conditional job offer pending a thorough background investigation to include a polygraph examination.

A base rate of \$45,000 would be in line with Colorado standards.

3. Should you seek higher salaries for Deputies how will you ensure that ANY tax increase goes toward training and making sure that Park County has qualified people in the positions?

When counties or municipalities examine salary increases, most utilize a system of surveying counties or towns that are similar in size, demographics, and cost of living. County Commissioners would typically look at salary increases for county employees as a whole, because ALL county departments are facing the same critical issues. There would have to be discussion, planning and consensus by county leadership on how the increases would be paid for from the current budget. Otherwise, other options would have to be considered and taken to the voters. I would work with other elected officials and county leadership to tackle this issue.

4. What will you direct your deputies /employees to focus on and why? How do these issues effect citizens of Park County? [ALL]

I will direct Deputies to focus on protecting the public and to serve the public trust, emphasizing customer service as they patrol subdivisions, prevent crime, and enforce traffic laws.

In discussing issues with citizens, this reflects their concerns.

5. Do you support the AG's position on attempting to enforce federal law on Marijuana? Will you allow your deputies to assist Federal law enforcement in simple possession/ manufacture cases? [Sheriff]

I would work with the Colorado Attorney General to defend the Colorado Constitution, and Colorado law.

I don't believe that U.S. Attorney General Sessions has concerns about legal marijuana operations in our state. In our state, there are currently illegal marijuana operations manufacturing marijuana to dispense in other states. That seems to be the root of the problem. I would investigate and enforce the laws addressing illegal operations that are currently being ignored by the Sheriff's Office in our communities.

6. How do you plan to balance the wants and needs of the rural vs suburban residents. There is a perception that Park county is becoming Denver lite. Do you agree with the code of the west if so why if not then why

I like the Code of the West's expression of hospitality, fair play, loyalty, and respect for the land.

Park County is experiencing growing pains. We are going to have to work with county leadership to address concerns of our growing community, addressing the needs of both the rural and more suburban residents.

7. What is your position on Civil Asset Forfeiture [ALL]

As your Sheriff, I would be hesitant to take a citizen's property under civil asset forfeiture. There have been serious abuses and mistakes by some law enforcement agencies. Innocent citizens have had their property seized with little recourse other than to take cases to court which, as we all know, can be an expensive process.

Law enforcement leaders must thoroughly examine the pros and cons of this issue before taking such a drastic step.

8. What is your position on eminent domain [ALL]

I'm a strong supporter of individual property rights.

With that said, there are times when eminent domain is utilized by the government for the greater good of all citizens. We have a case in Park County where land was purchased for a reservoir which will serve citizens. If eminent domain is used the property owner needs to be compensated fairly.

9. What procedures will you implement to provide transparency in your departments activities above and beyond the open records laws [ALL]

As a leader, I have always responded to requests on open records. The editor of our local paper, the Flume, can verify this.

I have insured that our citizens receive the information they have requested in a timely manner.

There will be instances where we can not readily release information, such as in the case of an ongoing investigation. Information would be released after the investigation had concluded.

10. Will you consider a run as an independent should you not be the caucus winner [ALL]  
No.

11. What will you do to streamline and optimize the budget of your department , what wasteful practices do you want to eliminate.

An immediate budget savings could be found in the Jail. I designed the facility to be able to accommodate both increases and decreases in inmate populations and the appropriate staffing levels to handle both. I will close down housing units that are not being utilized, reducing the size of the jail to accommodate the current Park County Jail population, and reducing the jail staffing to a level to accommodate lower inmate populations. This action alone would significantly reduce cost by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Police vehicles is another area where cost could be significantly reduced. Currently, the Sheriff's Office purchases a wide variety of vehicles. Many of them are SUV's. Dodge Durangos, for instance. Citizens will agree our county has some of the toughest driving conditions anywhere! When a new Durango is purchased it has to be upgraded. The Durango has low ground clearance and lift kits need to be added. (Have you noticed how many SO Durangos have damage to their underside?) The skid plate is plastic and has to be upgraded, towing packages are an upgrade. These inflate the overall cost of the vehicle, and increases the time the vehicle is out of service. I proposed getting away from SUV's and going to pick-ups. There are several that have police packages and are available on State bid programs for thousands less! The basic pickup has greater ground clearance, metal skid plates, and most towing packages are standard- at no extra cost. The vehicles can be placed into service several months earlier.

Sheriff's Vehicles would all be marked. I'm not a fan of unmarked law enforcement vehicles. This would also increase public awareness that deputies are around. Deputies would be issued new vehicles. Myself, and my command staff who are not in a vehicle eight hours a day, would use the older vehicles.

Under the current administration overtime and retention of deputies is a huge issue. Leadership and good management is missing. This is another area that that I would fix.

12. What personal and or economic relations do you have to current elected county officials.  
None.

14. What would you do different in regards to the most recent tragedy involving Miss. Long?  
Things leading up to, during and after this investigation.

It is clear that the Sheriff's Office is in over their heads. Competent investigators should have been brought in immediately and assigned as lead investigators. It is appalling to me that our Sheriff's Office was not truthful or forthright in advising citizens about the time line of events or that there was an armed suspect with thousands of rounds of ammunition. Such actions will not happen under my administration.

15. What will you do to insure that an armed Resource Officer is ALWAYS present during school hours at the Fitzsimmons Middle School and High School?

We need to include ALL Park County Schools. There are (5) school campus's located in Park County each one needs a SRO.

1. Platte Canyon and Fitzimmons Middle School.
2. Deer Creek Elementary.
3. South Park High School, South Park Middle School, and Edith Teter Elementary.
4. Lake George Charter School.
5. Guffey Charter School.

Of all the candidates I'm the only that worked to get a tax increase to fund armed Resource Officers in all of our schools. I believe at the time the cost was approximately \$12.00 per one hundred thousand dollars of property value. This tax initiative was defeated. By reducing our jail costs as stated earlier and with the approval of our county commissioners we could reallocate resources to where there needed our schools. As I have previously stated the safety of our kids is one of my top priorities. Citizens have my assurance, as your Sheriff, I will make this happen.

16. What will you do to decrease the illegal drugs coming into our county and the ability for our kids to obtain illegal drugs?

I hope many of you will recall that I was going after illegal drugs in our county and making a difference! Many of you will recall I went before the County Commissioners and was approved to add two Detectives specifically to investigate illegal drug operations. I worked with our County Attorney to create comprehensive county ordinances to address these issues. I created a drug hot line where concerned citizens could report illegal operations anonymously without fear of reprisal. I worked with our SRO's and DARE officers to educate our kids about the dangers of drugs in our schools. As your Sheriff this will be another of my top priorities.

17. What will you do about the fact that some of our current Deputies have been involved in activities in the past that have gotten them relieved of their positions then rehired at a later date? Activities that are illegal and violate the sworn oath they have taken.

As your Undersheriff I held officers accountable. As your Sheriff I will do the same.

18. What makes your promises or answers more believable than another candidates?  
My character. Please review my long work history. A common thread from those that know me is my integrity, and honesty. When I make a promise I keep it!

19. Why should we believe that you will truly do what you say you will do and that your answers aren't just campaign promises said to merely get elected?

As stated in question #18 I KEEP MY WORD!

20. Do you have kids currently enrolled in the Park County school system?

Yes. My daughter attends South Park High School. My son attends South Park Middle School.

21. Would you support or not support teachers in the Platte Canyon school system being trained and authorized to maintain a firearm in select classrooms?

I support having teachers and special deputies trained and authorized to carry a firearm in our schools, and have previously implemented this program. We have been lucky to have had veterans and others with specialized training available.

22. As an Accreditation & Policy Compliance Manager in a neighboring jurisdiction, I am wondering why the PCSO has not decided to pursue law enforcement accreditation? I believe many of the issues the PCSO has faced/is currently facing are covered by LE standards, and these programs would immensely help bring this agency back on track. Can the candidates speak as to their thoughts on pursuing this recognition?

Accreditation in a small agency is a very costly. That is why most small agencies are not accredited.

Law Enforcement standards must be followed to be of value. It was not a lack of policies and procedures or training that created recent problems, but rather a willful disregard of both. Both were provided. Both were ignored.

The most important issue to bring to our Sheriff's Office is LEADERSHIP!

23. Will you publish your agencies policy and procedure manual including use of force continuum and code of conduct publicly?

Yes, and I have always made these available for our citizens.

24. What do you think are the appropriate circumstances and criteria before implementing "no-knock" raids on private property? When is such risk of life to the deputies and victims worth it?

I do not believe in n- knock raids. The only exception would be to safeguard life, such as in a hostage situation.

25. Do you support individuals being able to own guns? If not, why and if so, why?

Yes. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment gives Americans the right to own firearms. I additionally believe in responsible ownership and was instrumental in getting a shooting range in our county for citizens to practice this God-given right.

26. Do you support the federal government removing marijuana from a schedule 1 drug? The DEA hopes to have a decision on this issue by July. I would support the removal of marijuana as a schedule 1 drug.

27. Have you ever disobeyed an order from a superior and if so, why

No.

28. If there are no funds available from the county or taxpayers, what can and will you do to augment the training and equipment for deputies?

Equipment is easily available through grants.

I have utilized free firearms training provided by internationally acclaimed John Farnam of Defense International and training provided by Randy Meyers of M Lazy C Ranch.

I was the elected president of the Central Mountain Training Foundation. This foundation was made up of 7 counties, 33 law enforcement agencies and 3300 law enforcement officers. We provided training as well as approving grant expenditures for both training and equipment, at no cost to any of the departments.

29. If elected, how will you avoid conflict of interest, favoritism and the perception of deep corruption that currently seems to be so prevalent.

As Sheriff, honesty and integrity are your trademark, and are evidence of your character. You lead by example! You must not give an impression of impropriety. Good leaders are fair and treat others with respect and dignity.

30. How would you have handled the Martin Wirth eviction differently? Please provide detail.

Generally, this would be considered a barricaded suspect situation. Protocols for barricaded suspect situations should have been implemented. There were no hostages and no citizens in immediate danger.

When managing a barricaded suspect, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES should entry be attempted. A perimeter would need to be established around the house. Neighbors who may be in danger would need to be evacuated. A SWAT call out should be initiated. Fire and ambulance should be staged a safe distance away, yet close enough to react quickly and efficiently. Incident command would be established. Attempts to communicate with the individual would be made. One must remember time is on our side, we have all the time we need to accomplish a step-by-step process. If contact with a barricaded suspect is successful, encourage the barricaded suspect to come out. If communication is unsuccessful, or the barricaded suspect refuses to leave, consider options. Review the situation: Is this a Felony, or lesser crime? Is there a violation of law that is serious enough to continue the operation? Evaluate. A reasonable response in a barricaded situation would be to utilize gas to force the suspect out of the residence. Another reasonable response is a "tactical withdrawal". Simply terminate the operation in favor of a better opportunity.