

**Restore the Balance  
La Plata Candidate Questionnaires**

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**Why are you running for La Plata County Commissioner? What qualifications do you bring and how are you preparing to serve if elected**

I am running for re-election to continue to roll up my sleeves and get things done for everyone. Regardless of where a person lives in the county or their political affiliation, my job is to work on issues that make a positive difference in the lives of La Plata County residents. Since I am unopposed, I will be honored to serve another term as a La Plata County Commissioner, and will continue to work for:

- Affordable and workforce housing
- Community safety in the face of climate change
- Taking care of land, air and water
- Excellent and available county services including infrastructure
- Healthy communities and a strong economy, for everyone

See below for my full platform with specifics.

I am a County Commissioner from District 2 (Durango and surrounding areas) having grown up on cattle ranch and farm in Lewis, Colorado north of Cortez. My goal in serving in office is to build healthy communities and a strong economy to benefit all residents in La Plata County. Since affordable housing is such a pressing issue, **I serve on the Board of Directors for the multi-jurisdictional Regional Housing Alliance**. We have made great strides in bringing more resources into the county; coordinating efforts; assessing the need; and advocating for housing policy.

Recognizing that a rapidly-changing climate has impacts for forest health, drought, and wildfire risk, with my fellow Commissioners and working with the City of Durango and the Durango Fire Protection District, **I helped establish the Wildfire and Watershed Protection Fund (WWPF)** in 2021 to carry out landscape-

scale mitigation work on private and public lands throughout La Plata County. The project has received over \$2,000,000 in funding for local mitigation work.

Because substance abuse disorders are impacting students, families and entire communities, **I am a founding member of the SouthWEST Opioid Response District (SWORD) Board of Directors.** This regional collaborative accepts and deploys State of Colorado opioid settlement(s) funds for use in getting more services for residents across southwest Colorado including future recovery housing and supports for those in recovery.

La Plata County has a rich agricultural heritage and local food movement. And, as a 4-H member for 10 years in my youth, **I bring those experiences serving as the liaison to the Colorado State University (CSU) local Extension Advisory Council.**

I served on the Board of San Juan Basin Public Health for three years until the entity dissolved on Dec. 31, 2023, replaced by two county-operated health departments including the La Plata County - Department of Public Health and a department in Archuleta County. **This has been a massive undertaking and one I am very proud of. Public health is strong in this county!**

Working with both the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribes, two sovereign nations with lands in La Plata County, is a high honor. **I am on the State of Colorado's Commission on Indian Affairs as an Ex-Officio Member.**

In order to raise La Plata County residents' concerns to the State Level, I actively serve on the land use, human services and public land steering committees for **Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI) and am involved with Counties and Commissioners Acting Together (CCAT).** Both of these statewide lobbying groups work on issues that impact us: affordable housing, wildfire, health care and human services, general government, public lands and more.

Prior to being elected to office, I was a professional facilitator leading numerous meetings and complex stakeholder processes to address a wide range of public issues. **Several of my key accomplishments include:** Hermosa Creek Workgroup; Firewise Southwest Colorado (now Wildfire Adapted Partnership) Southwest Trails Roundtable; La Plata Community Clinic; to name a few. From 1994—2000, I was executive director for six years of a regional nonprofit Operation Healthy

Communities (OHC), a group that helped complete projects to foster healthy communities.

My past **volunteer experiences** include the La Plata County Fiscal Needs Committee; Airport Planning Advisory Committee; County Road and Bridge Campaign Issues Committee; La Plata Community Clinic; United Way Fundraising Committee; Big Brothers/Big Sisters of La Plata County; La Plata Historical Society; Community Foundation Serving Southwest Colorado; and the Durango Food Bank.

I am honored to have **won awards** including: 2009 Colorado State Forest Service Statewide Partner of the Year; the 2009 Boys and Girls Club of La Plata County Service to Youth Award; and the Leadership La Plata Barbara Conrad Leadership Award in 2006.

My **education** includes holding a Bachelors of Arts degree in Social Work from Colorado State University and a Master of Social Work from the University of Denver (Denver campus program) and I am a 2001 graduate of Leadership La Plata. I am a 1993 graduate of the Grassroots Leadership Program spearheaded by the Community Resource Center (CRC America). I am a trainer for Leadership La Plata around the topics of conflict resolution. **In 2025, I will participate in the National Association of Counties High Performance Leadership Academy.**

With my husband John Norton, who is a Fort Lewis College graduate from the School of Business, we moved to Durango in 1994 to escape Denver's crime and pollution. My hobbies: hiking and getting outside; tending to cat Wilson; camping and 4-Wheeling; xeriscape gardening; exploring the Colorado Plateau; cooking; and catching the occasional PBS show.

Please note: While I am the District 2 candidate for re-election and in an unopposed race, County Commissioners serve all residents in the county no matter where they live.

**Do you agree with the seven principles Restore the Balance feels should guide political conduct in Colorado. If you do not agree with one or more of these principles, please identify and explain why.**

I agree with all of them. We cannot have a democracy or a healthy society when political discourse devolves to personal attacks, lying, twisting facts, ignoring the other party or interests, and employing a “my way or the highway”-attitude – not to mention violence and insurrection. As a professional who has worked for years with many groups to resolve conflicts and find solutions to pressing issues, I highly value the skills of listening, compromise and civility. **I will promote the values of Restore the Balance.**

**Do you believe Colorado’s current election laws and procedures provide for secure elections and encourage voter participation? Please explain the reasons for your answer.**

This precious and beautiful democracy is at risk. Yes, I firmly believe in and trust the oversight role and duties that the Secretary of State, County Clerks and trained election volunteers carry out. They, combined with laws and the courts, bring this county, state and country fair, trusted, transparent elections. **I am tremendously concerned about the election denial movement and believe we each must do everything possible to restore trust in elections.** I do strongly feel there are times when advocacy is necessary whether that be through one’s pen, voice or the courts as the election denial movement often uses tactics that do not lend themselves to normal civil discourse or compromise.

**If elected, what actions will you take to help find common ground with your fellow elected officials on both sides of the aisle.**

Serving as a County Commissioner is a nonpartisan job in practice. We work with many constituencies, organizations and elected officials from across the political spectrum every day. I have a good working relationship locally and statewide with people who are not in my party. The actions I will take are:

- Continue to reach out to people who view things differently. Read and listen to varying views on issues.
- Continue through the county’s two lobbying groups (CCI and CCAT) to find common ground on policy issues.
- Appoint people from different backgrounds to the county’s boards and commissions.

- Refrain from personal attacks, political theatre and drama when it comes to debating and deciding on public issues.
- Attend events hosted by people or groups who are not in my party.

**If elected, how will you listen to and represent the concerns of constituents who don't agree with you?**

I believe in genuinely listening, and then defining actions that incorporate the range of legitimate interests and views. Also, I make it a habit of outreaching to various people across the county when deciding an issue. This is important as it is very easy for elected officials to live in echo chambers.

**What are the top three issues facing La Plata County and briefly how do you plan to address these issues if elected?**

My platform is below. The top three issues facing the county:

- 1) The need to plan for growth and ensure that basic county services are provided including a safe, 21<sup>st</sup> century road system.
- 2) Working for more affordable and workforce housing.
- 3) Protect the health, safety and welfare of county residents.

Here is my platform.

**Grow an Economy that works for Everyone**

Together, we need to grow and bring good jobs to La Plata County to improve quality of life and create healthier communities for all.

My plan is to:

- Continue to improve County planning processes.
- Be a champion for infrastructure. County roads and bridges are the county's largest asset and we must ensure sustainable, available resources.
- Link job growth to action on affordable/workforce housing and availability of childcare and transit -- necessary components of a truly healthy community.
- Support development where infrastructure exists.

- Implement the policy that "growth pays its own way."
- Keep the Durango-La Plata County Airport vibrant and growing by backing current plans for upgrades and expansion.
- Keep marshalling resources to expand broadband to the entire county, with partners.
- Maintain close ties with organizations already working hard: La Plata Economic Development Alliance, Region 9 Economic Development District and others.

### **Ensure and Provide Adequate and Excellent County Services**

The County provides a long list of necessary services for residents. As a Commissioner, I will work to ensure these services not only continue but meet the evolving needs of a growing county.

#### My plan is to:

- Continue to make investments in the County employees who deliver services day- to-day by keeping wages and benefits fair and competitive, and paying a livable wage.
- Ensure that the new County Strategic Plan is implemented and that annual goals are then tied to success measurements.
- Support road impact fees and other measures to address the structural deficit in the Road and Bridge Department's budget.
- See the 2024 Fairgrounds Master Plan through to improve the site for all.
- Continually look for creative, cutting-edge and cost-effective ways to deliver services.

### **Ensure more Affordable and Workforce Housing**

Many young people, families, and seniors on fixed incomes are now priced out. This lack of affordable and workforce housing is impacting all sectors. We can and should do more.

#### My plan is to:

- Continue to serve on the Board of the Regional Housing Alliance (RHA); work with all partners to carry out the updated RHA 3-Year Strategic Plan and Workforce Housing Strategy.
- Support investments in affordable and workforce housing projects (note: the County has deployed nearly \$10M over the last two years to housing).

- Continue to support annual County Public Benefit Grants to nonprofits such as Home Funds, Housing Solutions for the Southwest and the RHA, and others.
- Implement the County's new housing policies passed in 2022.
- Stay at the table in problem solving related to homelessness and keep supporting Manna's Navigation Center.

### **Increase Safety in the Face of Climate Change**

Southwest Colorado is getting hotter and drier. We need to continue the good works happening and increase our capacity to respond to droughts, wildfires and flooding.

#### My plan is to:

- Determine paths for the County to address climate resiliency through public health, emergency response, wildfire preparedness, resource conservation (water and energy), etc.
- Continue to implement the Wildfire and Watershed Protection Fund (WWPF), a project I spear-headed with the City of Durango and Durango Fire; ensure funding for the WWPF is reliable so that residents can access resources to help with mitigation.
- Continue the work of the 2021- appointed County Wildfire Advisory Board.
- Determine strategies for stakeholders to assess water availability for better planning.
- Continue the cutting-edge emergency management planning and action already done by the County (i.e., annual county-wide drills, mitigation, hazard planning, etc.).
- Celebrate the regional weather radar project --- it's done and ribbon cutting planned in 2024!
- Track on actions in the county-wide CWPP (Community Wildfire Protection Plan); ensure timely updates to this multi-jurisdictional, action plan.
- Consider out-of-the-box collaborative solutions working alongside partners such as the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative, Four Rivers Collaborative, BLM, CPW, USFS, Wildfire Adapted Partnership, and others

### **Be a model for Modern/Clean Energy on the Western Slope**

We must protect important conservation, wildlife, neighborhood and air and water values in energy development. This county can and should be a model for renewables on the Western Slope.

My vision is to:

- Carry out details around being an “anchor tenant” in LPEA’s new solar garden.
- Continue to be a leader on the Western Slope for the protective, balanced oil and gas regulations instituted in 2023.
- Advocate to the State of Colorado to deploy as many resources as possible to plug and clean up orphaned and abandoned wells here in the county.
- Continue to communicate with the Southern Ute Indian Tribe regarding oil and gas as the vast majority of wells in the county are owned and operated by the Tribe.
- Develop pragmatic steps for addressing clean energy, conservation and sustainability throughout County Government.
- Work to responsibly assess and potentially permit renewable energy facilities where appropriate balancing the many interests: neighborhoods, water, wildfire risk, visual impacts, wildlife impacts, etc.

**Take care of Land, Air and Water and Balance Interests/Needs**

Private and public lands are valued by all and used in myriad ways. We all want clean air and water.

I will work to:

- Continually improve the County Land Use Code and planning systems.
- Update to the County's 2017 Comprehensive Plan in a timely manner.
- Speak up for conservation goals in State and Federal projects, policies and/or rules that have an impact on water, land and air quality.
- Keep strong relationships with the San Juan National Forest, Tres Rios BLM, Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the State of Colorado among many other land, air and water management entities.

**Work to Address the Urban/Rural Divide and Improve Civility**

We are living in a time when there is a very distinct “urban/rural” divide. I pledge to promote community understanding and a sense that we are all in this together because we are.



My vision is to:

- Keep, build and improve successful relationships with the City of Durango, Ignacio and Bayfield Town Boards, and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe.
- Be willing to always listen to everyone. Support endeavors that encourage conversation, understanding and dialogue.
- Serve on the CSU Extension Advisory Council.

**Be a Voice for Public Health, Youth and Families, and Seniors**

I care deeply for the health and well-being youth, families and seniors so I will:

- See through the continued successful transition to county-department-led Public Health; ensure adequate funding of public health services.
- Carefully listen to and support the new County Board of Health.
- Continue to be a leader and voice in the work done by SWORD (SouthWEST Opioid Response District) to get more substance abuse services in the region including recovery housing.
- Support the County Sheriff Department's new co-responder program (where Sheriff's Deputies and mental health professionals jointly respond to appropriate calls).
- Find ways to keep the La Plata County Senior Center and senior programming strong.
- Support, via prioritized public benefit grants, the many nonprofits working on these issues.

**Excellent Government for All**

We are living in a time when trust in the national government is low but people still believe (mostly) in the power and promise of local governments to improve their lives. I will continue to serve everyone, build trust, speak up for democracy and bring residents' concerns to other levels of government through legislative activities.

So, I will:

- Stand up for democracy by supporting our County Clerk and her staff, all election volunteers regardless of their political affiliation.
- Keep building trust with constituents by continuing "Office Hours" and "On the Road" sessions, youth outreach and more

- Step up strides in County Government to truly demonstrate values of diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Oversee the process of County staff and departments articulating performance goals and metrics for success.
- Be a robust voice in legislative activities via Colorado Counties, Inc., Counties and Commissioners Acting Together and the National Association of Counties.