

Candidate Questionnaire
Mesa County Commissioner - Cody Davis

1 - What is your motivation for running for Mesa County Commissioner? What are your qualifications to serve?

My motivation to run for reelection comes from multiple sources, but my family is the foremost one. Recently, I had a conversation with friends who have young adults still living at home—not because they aren't ready to be independent, but because they simply can't afford rent or to buy a home. It's heartbreaking to think that if we don't address the housing crisis and the gap between wages and living costs, my own children might face the same reality. I have five kids—two biological and three adopted—and the thought that they may be forced to leave the community due to these challenges deeply concerns me.

My wife Alana and I served as foster parents for nearly 12 years, opening our home to 17 children, and had the privilege of adopting three of them. Through this experience, I've seen firsthand the pain, addiction, and mental health struggles that plague parts of our community. I'm driven by a desire to ensure that this won't be the future my children—or anyone's children—inherit.

As for my qualifications, they come from a mix of personal, professional, and public service experience:

- **As a dad**, I understand the struggles that families and young people are facing.
- **As a business owner and employer**, I grasp the economic pressures of running a business and the financial burdens that inflation and rising costs place on working families.
- **With a master's degree in public administration**, I have the academic foundation to understand policy and governance.
- **Four years of experience as County Commissioner** has taught me the importance of building partnerships, forming coalitions, and prioritizing the right choices over the popular ones.

I'm running because I believe in Mesa County's future, and I'm committed to making it a place where my kids—and yours—can thrive.

2 - What do you perceive as the top three issues facing Mesa County that you propose to address, and how would you address those issues if elected?

Many of the issues we face aren't just local—they require action beyond Mesa County. Inflation, for instance, impacts everything from housing affordability to everyday essentials like fuel, groceries, school supplies, and healthcare. This is largely a national issue, driven by excessive federal spending. While the short-term benefits might be clear, the long-term impact of inflation acts like a hidden tax, hitting families hard. This is, without a doubt, the top issue affecting our community. Locally, I see the following as genuine priorities:

Housing Affordability

With interest rates skyrocketing, it's become increasingly difficult for people to afford homes. At the end of July, the median home price in Mesa County reached \$400,000 (and \$472,000 in Grand Junction). A 1% reduction in interest rates could save homeowners up to \$500 on their mortgage payments, but until those rates drop, the path to homeownership will remain tough. Locally, Mesa County is committed to keeping impact fees low, maintaining stable property taxes (I sat on the Prop HH tax advisory committee that found bipartisan agreement on legislation to cap property taxes), and reducing unnecessary regulations to make affordable housing developments a reality. We've thoroughly examined Proposition 123 to see if we could leverage any of its funding for local use, but found that Mesa

County already implements many of its provisions. For example, we allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by right and have lowered impact fees to promote affordable housing in unincorporated areas.

Mental and Behavioral Health

Mental and behavioral health have long been challenges in our community, and addressing them is key to improving overall well-being. Last year, Mesa County launched a new behavioral health department with a mission to provide accessible and coordinated care, support vulnerable populations, identify issues early, promote education and prevention, and continuously improve services using data. Thanks to strong partnerships and initiatives, our jail population has decreased significantly over the last four years. Instead of remaining stuck in the criminal justice system, people are receiving the services they need, holding down jobs, and providing for their families. This is the direction we need to keep moving in, and I'm eager to continue supporting these efforts.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Transportation has always been a forward-looking concern for Grand Valley residents. The key is investing early in infrastructure—whether that's roads, broadband, water, sewer, or health services—so it's ready when needed. I will continue to prioritize infrastructure improvements to ensure our economy remains responsive to the community's needs. Poorly maintained roads with a pavement condition index (PCI) below 60 (Mesa County's average is 72) can cost drivers an average of \$500 annually in car repairs directly related to poor road conditions. Additionally, repairing neglected roads is far more expensive than keeping them in good condition. By focusing on early maintenance, expansion, and improvements—including bike and pedestrian—we can maintain Mesa County as a great place to live and get around.

3 - Do you believe Colorado's current election laws and procedures administered by Mesa County provide for secure elections? Please explain the reasons for your answer?

Yes, but voter confidence is imperative. In Mesa County, every voter uses a paper ballot, which provides a clear and verifiable record. In 2021, the county used two systems to count and double-check the votes. To reassure voters further, we even did a hand recount that year, confirming the accuracy of the machines. Additionally, the county posts ballot images online for public review and has strict procedures to ensure the voting machines are not connected to the internet. Finally, thorough audits are done before, during, and after every election to catch any issues. These layers of security help make sure elections in Mesa County are fair and trustworthy. However, additional work can be done, especially around the security of mail-in ballots, which boast of convenience but crack the door open to registration fraud. However, the environment for discussing improvements to the system, honestly and objectively, has been poisoned by the actions of Tina Peters and others. The fight over election integrity shouldn't be seen as fair vs unfair, but a battle between ballot accessibility and vote security. A happy balance must be fought for.

4 - If elected, what actions would you take to help ensure more effective intergovernmental communication and collaboration to facilitate better outcomes for Mesa County constituents?

If elected, I would continue prioritizing open and transparent communication between Mesa County and all our government partners. While we may not always agree on every issue, our shared goal is to serve the people effectively, with integrity, and according to strong principles. I believe in breaking down silos and fostering collaboration across agencies rather than allowing individuals or departments to build their own "kingdoms." It's not about personal legacy or who gets the credit; it's about achieving meaningful results for the community. I commit to strengthening relationships with other governmental organizations to ensure we work together for the best outcomes for Mesa County's constituents.

5 - In your view, which County programs or services are neglected or underfunded in the current budget? If so, how do you intend to address those areas, if elected?

The primary responsibility of a county commissioner is allocating limited resources in a way that best serves the community. This is a key role of the position—prioritizing the use of tax dollars. If you ask any of the 30+ departments in Mesa County, they'll tell you they are underfunded. However, if I had to highlight one area that's been hit the hardest, it would be the capital budget, particularly for roads.

With stagnant revenue sources and rising costs, road maintenance has become a significant concern. For example, in 2019, the County was able to resurface around 20 miles of road. Today, due to inflation, we can only manage about 10 miles. If roads aren't maintained at an acceptable level (a Pavement Condition Index, or PCI, above 60), the cost of repairs will ultimately fall on residents through higher maintenance expenses. Fortunately, Mesa County is currently well above that threshold, but I want to ensure we stay far from the 60 PCI mark.

6 - What, if anything, can the county do to address affordable housing for families making less than \$80,000 per year?

The American dream of homeownership should never be out of reach. The county can and will continue focusing on removing barriers to private sector development while strategically supporting efforts to provide more affordable options. One of the most effective ways to create affordable housing is by increasing inventory across all price points. When higher-income households move into newly built homes, they vacate more affordable homes, so on and so forth, which helps to open up opportunities for those with lower incomes.

As previously mentioned, Mesa County has already taken steps to promote affordable housing by reducing impact fees in unincorporated areas, allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by right, and reducing regulations. Additionally, Mesa County allocates its Private Activity Bonds to the state, which uses them to provide down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers—an important resource for families striving to enter the housing market.

Looking forward, the county's role should continue to focus on fostering a development-friendly environment and leveraging available tools, like Private Activity Bonds, to help working families access homeownership. By supporting the private sector in responding to demand, we can expand affordable housing options.

7 - What, if anything, should the county do to help address homelessness?

Homelessness is an issue that cities like San Francisco, Denver, and Chicago have struggled with for decades, often with little success. If we're talking about families who are genuinely seeking affordable housing, please refer to my earlier comments on affordability—something we can address with more robust down payment assistance programs to help them secure stable housing.

However, if the reference is to the visible homelessness we've all witnessed in places like downtown Denver, Mesa County has taken a different approach. We enforce the prohibition of camping on county property—not to push people off the streets, but to encourage them to access the services that do exist in our community. The goal is to align resources with the needs while maintaining human dignity and enforcing standards that ensure public safety and a healthy community.

Our approach is humane. When connecting with those experiencing homelessness, we send out a full team from the Mesa County Sheriff's Office, the Co-Response team, and the MAC team (Multi-agency collaboration). They bring food, water, and even dog food, and take time to understand what each person needs.

Those who accept help are often genuinely homeless—not just individuals caught in a cycle of addiction or convicts running from the law. We aim to provide services to those in need, but we also hold people accountable to maintain public order and safety.

8 - What, if anything, should the county do to advance community solar projects?

First off, I'm proud to have been named among Colorado's Solar and Storage Champions for Mesa County's mindful approach to solar development. Mesa County has taken significant steps to advance solar development by updating our land development code to accommodate solar projects in our community. This updated code encourages the use of all types of solar but specifically incentivizes agrivoltaics, while carefully considering both the positive and negative impacts on the greater community. The process we went through is something I'm particularly proud of, as it strikes a balance between protecting private property rights and ensuring that neighboring properties aren't unduly affected.

We've created a framework that allows landowners to put their properties to the highest productive use while remaining cognizant of the needs and concerns of the surrounding community. This careful balance has earned us recognition statewide recognition.

As we move forward, Mesa County will continue to promote solar energy by ensuring that there are no unnecessary local barriers to production while working with developers and the community to minimize any potential downsides. Our goal is to foster renewable energy growth that benefits everyone without sacrificing the rights and well-being of our residents. Again, balance is a driving force.

9 - Mesa County's population has grown by over 100,000 since 1970, yet we still have a three-person board of commissioners. Would you support expansion of the board to five members, electing either 3 or 5 commissioners by district? If yes, what would you do to make that happen?

This exact issue was put to voters in 2018, and lost by 17 points. At that time, voters gave a decisive "no," primarily due to concerns over the financial cost of adding more commissioners. Since then, there hasn't been significant public demand for expansion, except for a few individuals dissatisfied with the current political makeup of the board.

Regardless of the past performance of the 5-commissioner question on the ballot, I understand that governance should evolve with the population's needs. Mesa County's population has indeed grown significantly—well over 160,000 today—and some may argue this justifies increased representation. If re-elected, I would be happy to refer the measure back to the ballot, allowing voters to reconsider the question. I'm a firm believer in the will of the voters.

10 - Do you endorse each of the seven principles Restore the Balance proposes to guide political conduct in Western Colorado? If there are one or more principles you do not endorse, please identify them, and explain why.

- 1. Political parties, citizens and elected officials should vigorously compete over values, principles and ideas, but must also find common ground to solve problems and pass needed legislation.**

I like the idea behind this principle, especially the focus on competing for values. I believe that in our community, we already share most of the desired outcomes—it's just the solutions where we often disagree. The key is recognizing that common ground exists in our goals, even if the paths we envision differ. That's where our effort should be: debating and refining solutions while staying grounded in the shared values that drive us. It's through this competition of ideas, principles, and approaches that we can ultimately pass the legislation needed to solve problems. By keeping the focus on solutions and values, we can foster a healthy, productive political environment that benefits the whole community.

- 2. Facts, supported by objectively examined evidence, are the basis for what to believe and how to act.**

Without further explanation, I believe this principle is dangerous. The idea that science alone should dictate policy, without a moral or philosophical framework to guide it, is deeply concerning. Science and data are invaluable for understanding the world, but they don't inherently provide us with the guidance on how we should live, what values we prioritize, or what principles ought to govern society.

For example, science might suggest that if humans stopped consuming water agriculturally and domestically, we could solve drought issues. While true on paper, such a solution ignores the basic needs of society—food production, sanitation, and overall well-being. That's exactly why science needs to be paired with a moral framework. Without it, we run the risk of adopting cold, utilitarian solutions that disregard human dignity, freedom, and quality of life. The role of science is to inform public policy, not to rule it.

Yes, we should base decisions on facts, but we also need to consider unintended consequences—like economic collapse job losses. More importantly, policy must stay grounded in the core values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Science can tell us what “could” be done, but our values guide us in what “should” be done. When we lose that balance, we risk making decisions that devalue human life and freedom, undermining the very fabric of our society.

3. No one person or political party has a monopoly on the best public policy proposals; communication and good faith negotiations are essential to the legislative process.

I agree with the sentiment. No single person or party has a patent on perfect public policy—if they did, we'd all be living in utopia. Humility is the key ingredient in public policy, and it pairs well with a dash of common sense.

4. The public interest must come before party interests, for voters and elected officials alike.

A bit vague, but I agree in principle.

5. Extremists of all kinds attract supporters and money by appealing to fears and resentments, amplifying divisions instead of truly addressing problems.

I'm not sure how you would implement it as a principle, but I agree with the sentiment.

6. Citizens should be free to run for or hold office without being threatened or harassed.

I 100% agree.

7. Citizens may certainly exercise their personal freedoms, but they may not ignore their personal responsibilities to the community at large.

This principle underscores the importance of understanding that personal freedoms are not limitless. Individual liberty must be exercised with the awareness that it ends where it begins to infringe on the rights of others. It's often said that "your freedom to swing your fist ends at the tip of my nose."