



Local Political Questionnaires



Russell County Sheriff Candidate *Jeffery A. Hancock*

1. Public Safety - What do you believe are the biggest public safety challenges facing the county today?

The biggest public safety challenge facing our county today is drug activity, especially trafficking, and the ripple effects it creates; thefts, burglaries, and the strain it places on families. Compounding that problem is a lack of consistent, around-the-clock coverage. When you combine those two issues, you create opportunities for crime and reduce the county's sense of safety.

Public safety starts with presence. When people know a deputy can get there quickly; criminals will know we are watching and working together, we will change their behavior.

2. Drug Enforcement - Illegal drugs continue to affect many communities. What strategies would you use to combat drug trafficking and addiction?

Drug enforcement requires a balanced approach. We will target traffickers by working with partners like the Drug Enforcement Administration and Financial Crimes Enforcement Network to follow money and hopefully take apart operations, not just seize drugs.

I support intelligence led policing to focus on major dealers. At the same time, we'll treat addiction as a crisis and support programs like Casey's Law. We will equip Deputies with the tools they need. We will get the community involved in our efforts.

3. Community Policing - How would you strengthen relationships between law enforcement and the public?

Deputies should be out in the communities, not just answering calls, but attending events, visiting schools, and engaging with citizens in a positive way long before there is a problem. Communication has to be open and transparent.

Regular updates, community meetings, and being accessible to the public go a long way into building trust and reducing misunderstandings. Building partnerships with local agencies, schools, churches, and other groups creates a unified front, showing that law enforcement is part of the community, not separate from it.

4. Department Management - How would you manage budgets, staffing, and training within the sheriff's office?

Managing budgets, staffing, and training requires discipline and clear priorities. The budget must be transparent and focused on patrol coverage, equipment, and personnel, while working with the Fiscal Court, pursuing grants, and eliminating waste. Staffing depends on strong recruitment and retention through competitive pay and hazardous duty retirement, fair schedules, and a professional work culture. Deputies need consistent, high quality instruction, including joint training with local agencies, to ensure they operate safely and effectively as a unified team.

5. Transparency and Accountability - What steps would you take to ensure accountability and public trust in the sheriff's office?

I will maintain open communication through regular public updates, community meetings, and clear reporting on the budget and our operations. I would make sure that policies are followed consistently with fair and impartial enforcement. I support the use of body cameras and will comply with any open records requests. Most importantly, I will lead by example, holding myself and the staff to the highest standards to earn and maintain the public's trust.

Candidate's Top Priority if Elected:

First, rebuild and restore dependable, round-the-clock patrol coverage so every part of the county is protected.

Second, strengthen drug enforcement by targeting traffickers while supporting pathways for those Russell Countians struggling with addiction.

Third, maintain strong fiscal discipline by managing the budget responsibly, pursuing grants, and protecting taxpayer dollars.

Fourth, invest in training and professionalism including joint training with local agencies.

Finally, rebuild trust through transparency, accountability, and consistent, fair enforcement for the county.



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District 1 Magistrate Candidate *Eric West*

1. County Spending - What areas of county government spending should be re-evaluated or reduced, and why?

If elected, I will make it a priority to thoroughly review and evaluate each line item within the county's Financial Statement Appropriation Condition Report for Fiscal Year July 2025 through July 2026. With approximately 250 individual line items and a total budget of about \$4.77 million, this process will require careful, deliberate analysis.

As I continue reviewing the current year-to-date report ending March 31, 2026, it is still too early to determine how each category will ultimately close out the fiscal year. However, I believe it is both responsible and necessary to closely examine areas such as office supplies, salaries, travel, and training to identify potential efficiencies.

Any adjustments must be thoughtful and well-informed, but my goal is to ensure taxpayer dollars are being used as effectively as possible. Through a detailed and transparent review process, I will work to identify opportunities for savings that could help strengthen our county's financial position and, where feasible, ease the tax burden for residents of District One.

2. Road Funding Priorities - What standards would you use to determine which road projects receive funding first?

Regarding road funding priorities, I believe the Fiscal Court and the County Judge/Executive must work collaboratively to identify and address the most critical road needs across the entire county. A unified, strategic approach ensures that available resources are invested where they will have the greatest impact on safety, connectivity, and long-term infrastructure improvement.

Thoughtful prioritization of road projects not only enhances daily travel for residents, but also supports economic development and tourism—key factors in attracting new residents and strengthening our local workforce.

While I am committed to the success of the county as a whole, my primary responsibility will be to the residents of District One. I will advocate strongly for their needs, ensuring their roads receive fair and careful consideration throughout funding discussions and project planning. Open communication will be central to that effort. I will make it a priority to listen to District One residents, remain accessible, and ensure their concerns and input are consistently represented in the decision-making process.

3. Taxes - do you support raising, lowering, or maintaining current county tax rates? Explain.

County taxes must remain a top priority for the Fiscal Court. As the representative for District One, my goal will always be to maintain or, when fiscally responsible, reduce the tax burden on our residents. Any decisions regarding tax rates should be guided by careful review of the county's budget and a commitment to responsible stewardship of public funds.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that no single magistrate sets tax policy alone. Adjustments to tax rates require the consideration and approval of the entire Fiscal Court. I will work collaboratively with my fellow magistrates to ensure any decisions are thoughtful, transparent, and in the best interest of the taxpayers we serve.

4. Economic Development - What role should Fiscal Court play in recruiting new businesses and jobs?

Our county benefits from having a dedicated economic development organization, with the County Judge/Executive serving as a member of its board, focused on recruiting new businesses and supporting growth. While this group leads those efforts, economic development is a shared responsibility, and every elected official has a role to play.

As your magistrate for District One, I will be actively engaged with key partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Industrial Development Authority to support business recruitment, job creation, and community investment. Strengthening our local economy not only creates employment opportunities, but also enhances quality of life for our residents.

The Fiscal Court should also explore every available option to support these efforts and incentivize new business and job creation across the county. If targeted tax incentives are appropriate, they should be carefully evaluated alongside other tools and programs available within the court's legal authority. Any such measures must be considered thoughtfully to ensure they provide long-term benefits to our community.

Sustainable growth requires collaboration, leadership, and a commitment to progress. I will work to ensure District One and the entire county are well-positioned to attract new opportunities, support existing businesses, and build a stronger future for our community.

5. Transparency - How would you improve transparency and public participation in Fiscal Court decisions?

As your magistrate, I will be accessible and responsive to the residents of District One on all matters before the Fiscal Court, including issues under consideration and proposals being developed on your behalf. Transparency and open communication will be central to how I serve.

I strongly encourage residents to attend Fiscal Court meetings and stay engaged in the decision-making process. In addition, I will utilize social media and other communication channels to keep the public informed, share updates, and provide opportunities for feedback. Remaining visible, approachable, and accountable will be a top priority as your District One Magistrate.

Candidate's Top Priority if Elected:

If elected, my top priority will be to quickly gain a thorough understanding of all issues currently before the Fiscal Court, including the details and context behind each matter. Being fully informed is essential to making sound, responsible decisions that best serve the residents of District One.

In addition, I will place a strong emphasis on reviewing and evaluating current fiscal year spending to ensure I am well-prepared for the next budget cycle. While road conditions and infrastructure remain a significant concern, my foremost responsibility will be to understand the full scope of the court's agenda and approach each decision with careful consideration, professionalism, and a focus on what is best for District One.