

County Candidates Questionnaire – 2016

Don Koester – Washington County Commissioner Pct. 1

1. Why have you decided to run for election at this time? I am running for office to do something about the constant rise in property taxes and to help our county economy. I want to encourage a positive business climate by keeping taxes low and working to create more jobs in the area.

2. What key competencies do you feel you possess to be an elected official? Briefly describe your background in financial management, leadership, communications, understanding of labor/HR issues, understanding of local economic issues, ability to contribute to strategic planning and initiatives, etc. As a small business owner, my years of service in Washington County have given me a background that is perfect to serve as county commissioner. I have excellent financial and management skills from spending years here in Washington County, where I have owned a successful business. Whether it is balancing the checkbook or recruiting and retaining customers, I have a strong understanding of the hard work and values that have made Washington County great. My strong work ethic and longstanding reputation as an honest broker will be useful as a public servant. I hold several state licenses in my trade, and have made a career by delivering solid results. People want someone who is a leader but also a listener. In my years of solving local problems, I have learned to listen to people and work together to put a plan into action.

3. If you are elected, what do you consider to be the top priorities to work on over the next four years?) If elected, my top priorities will be three simple goals. Number one is creating a good job climate and lowering taxes. Number two will be expanding our law enforcement and EMS capabilities. Number three is improving our infrastructure such as the roads and bridges in our precinct. I will be a full-time commissioner who will focus on those goals everyday, all day.

4. What do you consider to be the top issue affecting our local economic growth? The top issue that is impacting our economic growth is property taxes and job creation. A healthy local economy means a better quality of life for everyone but that only happens when we create more jobs. We must encourage more industries to locate in Washington County and work to make sure that businesses here today are not gone tomorrow. That means we must have good workforce training and we must keep property taxes as low as possible.

5. What could you do as an elected official to help small businesses in the community? I would use my years of experience as a small business owner to help recruit and help retain businesses. We have a wonderful story to tell here in Washington County. As an elected official, I would use my position to tell the story of our county to anyone interested in locating here. I'm proud to say that I've spent my entire life working in Washington County and I would work hard each day to build on our success.

6. What is your opinion of offering economic development incentives to lure capital investment and jobs to the community? Our local levels of government in Washington County have incentives that can be used to help encourage business. I support these tools in some cases but think that we must be very careful in how any tax breaks are decided. I support

economic development incentives but I also want to make sure we have safeguards to protect the taxpayers.

7. How important do you feel the relationship is between Washington County government officials and City of Brenham officials, City of Burton officials and the unincorporated communities? How could these relationships be improved? My background in business has shown me that when you have many hands working as a team, the work is easier to handle. The Washington County government must work well with the Cities of Brenham and Burton as well as the many unincorporated communities. When local governments fight, the real loser is the taxpayer. The current relationship between the county and other local government is good but it could be better. Any relationship can be improved upon and I will suggest that we hold some town-hall meetings where local government officials can sit down with the people and share ideas.

8. Do you support the Washington County Chamber's "Government Advocacy Policy Statements for 2017?" This will be a key document for our community's advocacy activities at the state level. Does it include any policy statements you do not agree with? Is there anything you would suggest adding to bring to the attention of state leaders during the upcoming legislative session? The Washington County Chamber of Commerce has been a leader for many years in helping our local business community get involved and take an active role in government. As a member of the Chamber of Commerce, I proudly plan to support the most recent policy statements for 2017. My one suggestion would be that the statement could be even more forceful about protecting our local water. If we lose our groundwater then we lose our future ability to recruit new industries. I would say that we here in Washington County need to support water policies in Austin only if they are respecting our local control.

**Return by Oct. 5, 2016 to:
voterinfo@brenhamtexas.com**

WASHINGTON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
314 S. Austin Street Brenham, TX 77833
979-836-3695 ★ www.BrenhamTexas.com