

Hays County Commissioner Candidates Questionnaire 2024

Morgan Hammer

Precinct 3 Candidate

1. Please describe your experience, areas of expertise and leadership style and how you feel they make/will make you an effective County Commissioner.

As a small business owner with a background in financial advising and real estate, I have worked hard to establish myself as a professional in my industry. I am proud to be a Texas State University alum, where I graduated from the McCoy School of Business, supporting myself through my studies.

Having lived in Hays County over a decade, I have cultivated a strong appreciation for our community, motivating me to engage in various local initiatives, such as San Marcos Young Professionals, the non-profit Mission Able, First Baptist San Marcos, and the San Marcos Chamber of Commerce. I actively seek out volunteer opportunities throughout the year to exemplify the servant leadership I aim to promote. My communication style emphasizes active listening and prompt, effective responses. Deeply committed to my faith, I prioritize my roles as a dedicated wife and mother to my family.

2. What do you see as the biggest challenges our local businesses face? What can you do as a County Commissioner to help overcome them?

Local businesses face challenges such as high costs, funding hurdles, regulatory requirements, hiring skilled employees, competing with larger businesses, and vulnerability to economic downturns.

As a County Commissioner, my goal is to take the lead in exploring potential incentives for business owners, such as tax breaks. I will also facilitate partnerships with financial institutions to support small business owners. I believe that by re-evaluating the permitting processes in our area and offering assistance where possible, we can improve the often frustrating experience that many small business owners face. Additionally, I aim to collaborate with Texas State to establish training programs for college students, ensuring

a pipeline of skilled workers for local businesses. I am committed to bolstering initiatives during economic downturns and partnering with local organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to encourage local shopping throughout Hays County.

3. How will you balance community discussions and bridge the gap between private citizens and the business community when they are at odds on issues that impact the economic environment or other vital issues that affect San Marcos?

Various elements are crucial for ensuring that both private citizens and the San Marcos business community feel acknowledged, appreciated, and respected. Three necessary factors stand out to foster a sense of equal understanding: leadership, inclusivity, and open communication.

Strong leadership can guide our community with a clear vision and purpose. Leaders who actively engage with diverse perspectives can bridge the gap between different groups and create a unified front.

Inclusivity is equally crucial. By embracing the rich tapestry of backgrounds, experiences, and ideas within our community, we can foster a sense of belonging and mutual respect. This means not only inviting everyone to the table but ensuring that their voices are genuinely considered in the decision-making process.

Finally, open communication allows for transparent, honest dialogue can dispel misunderstandings and build trust. Regular forums, feedback channels, and collaborative platforms can facilitate this exchange, allowing concerns to be addressed promptly and solutions to be co-created.

4. What can the County do to encourage existing business growth and new business attraction?

Where you will see the most impact from the county on growth and new business attraction stems from high levels of public safety and ensuring we have the infrastructure to support a thriving economy.

This means investing in robust transportation networks, reliable utilities, and advanced communication systems. By prioritizing these areas, the county can create a conducive environment for businesses to flourish and for residents to enjoy a high quality of life. Additionally, we will partner with organizations such as GSMP, to create workforce development programs that will equip the local population with the skills needed to meet the demands of new industries and emerging technologies.

The county's efforts to maintain a clean and sustainable environment will also play a crucial role in attracting businesses that prioritize corporate social responsibility. Green spaces, parks, and recreational facilities can enhance the community's appeal, making it a desirable place to live and work.

5. If elected, what will you do to further/strengthen the relationship between Hays County Commissioners Court and Texas State University?

As a proud graduate of Texas State University, I believe there is significant work to be done to foster engagement between the University and local government, such as commissioners court. Building strong partnerships between the university and local government can lead to numerous benefits for both entities and the county at large. By collaborating on projects and initiatives, the university can provide valuable research, resources, and expertise, while the local government can offer practical opportunities for students and faculty to apply their knowledge in real-world settings.

One way to foster this engagement is through the establishment of joint committees or task forces that focus on key issues such as economic development, public health, and sustainability. These groups can work together to identify challenges, brainstorm solutions, and implement strategies that benefit both the university and the community.

6. What improvements do you believe are needed for adequate transportation infrastructure in the San Marcos area?

In general, the transportation plans for Precinct 3, City of San Marcos and Hays County effectively meet the majority of local needs. I have received comments from constituents about the roads at Centerpoint and McCarty. The presence of railroad tracks disrupts smooth traffic flow and can impede emergency responders' ability to reach their destinations promptly. Initiatives are already underway to tackle these issues, making it essential to persist in executing these plans successfully. I pledge to advance projects rapidly to keep pace with the demands of our community if elected.

7. A major issue facing the region is housing availability, lack of workforce housing, and housing affordability and diversity. If elected, what actions would you suggest to create more housing choices in San Marcos?

As a community, it is our responsibility to ensure that our residents can afford to live

here. This requires a multi-faceted approach. Firstly, we need to focus on our own financial resources and create a tight budget to prevent unnecessary taxes. Secondly, we must establish consistent rules and regulations that prioritize environmental and public safety concerns in Precinct 3. Finally, collaboration with colleagues in the county and municipalities, and working with the private sector, can help us explore ways to maintain affordability in Hays County.

8. If you received a \$1 million grant to use for Hays County any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?

Hypothetically, I would allocate the grant funds in the following ways: prioritizing the safety of our children, reducing out-of-county expenses for Hays County, and increasing investment in research focused on water conservation/preservation. A segment of these funds would be dedicated to strengthening drug awareness initiatives, particularly concerning fentanyl. Furthermore, equip law enforcement with the necessary tools to help prevent drug-related fatalities in our schools. Another part of the budget would focus on improving our ability to retain correctional officers at the Hays County Jail. We face challenges in adequately staffing our facility to house inmates locally, often resulting in costs associated with housing them in other counties. While our jail can accommodate the existing Hays County inmate population, we lack sufficient staff to operate efficiently. Lastly, a portion of the funds would be invested in enhancing our understanding of water conservation and preservation practices in Hays County.

9. Please review the San Marcos Chamber's "Government Relations & Advocacy Guiding Principles" document. Do you agree with all of these statements? Please describe below any statements you do not agree with.

I fully support the statements and overall goals outlined in the "Government Relations and Advocacy Guiding Principles." However, I would like to emphasize the importance of adopting a holistic approach when contemplating growth. We must be mindful of any unintended consequences that may arise from hasty or poorly executed expansion.

10. Any additional information you would like members of the San Marcos Area Chamber of Commerce to know?

It would be a tremendous privilege to have the opportunity to serve as your county

commissioner for precinct 3 in Hays County. As a long-time member of the Chamber, a resident of the San Marcos ETJ, and a proud alumnus of Texas State University, I am confident in my ability to effectively represent you and our community. I strongly believe in servant leadership and am dedicated to serving you, your family, and your business with diligence. Understanding the importance of supporting small businesses—since my husband and I operate one ourselves—I commit to being accessible, transparent, and upholding the highest standards of integrity. I truly care about your family's safety, the protection and preservation of our natural resources in Hays County, nurturing a thriving economy, and developing positive infrastructure that will benefit your local business. I would sincerely appreciate your vote this November.

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