



King County Council District 4 Questions

King County Council District 4 Candidate Name: [Becka Johnson Poppe](#)

Contact information: becka@votebecka.com

Hello, King County Council District 4 candidates: To provide a valuable service to our members and the Magnolia community, the Magnolia Chamber of Commerce seeks information about your candidacy for the King City Council, District 4. Your concise answers to the following questions will allow the Chamber membership and other engaged community members to make an informed judgment about your candidacy. As a reminder, the Magnolia Chamber does not endorse candidates, provide financial assistance, or provide campaign support other than sharing information. Your answers will be posted on our website, discovermagnolia.org, unedited and publicly available to website visitors. Thank you for your participation and for answering our candidate questionnaire.

- 1. Have you reviewed the Metro Connects plan, the approved 25-year plan *Metro Connects*, which acts as a guiding policy framework for the evolution of Metro to accommodate population growth and increase in services? What improvement would you like to see in Metro services, particularly in areas like Magnolia?**

Yes, I am very familiar with the Metro Connects. The vision of Metro Connects holds true, but we need a refreshed Metro Connects plan, informed by post-pandemic data. I will advocate for round-the-clock service for those with non-traditional commute schedules, including partial day commutes, and those using metro for recreation.

My top priorities include:

- Bringing people back to riding buses with better service, reliability, safety, and affordability;
- Bringing people back to driving buses with better pay, benefits, workforce development, and safety;
- Electrifying the bus and vehicle fleet alongside having coordinated electric charging infrastructure; and
- Identifying a sustainable funding source to meet the needs of today and tomorrow.

Our buses are a microcosm of what is happening in our larger society and, right now, too many of our neighbors are in crisis and having episodes on buses completely unsupported. To bring people back to buses, and to keep bus operators safe, we need to improve the transportation experience. We need an on-demand, unarmed non-gun crisis responder team to support community members on our buses when they need that assistance. Operators should be able to flag a care team to meet them en-route and provide supportive services to riders who are experiencing mental health crises, homelessness, or substance abuse disorders.

There are few jobs more challenging than driving a bus—my neighbor is a bus operator and he's one of the toughest people I know. We can't expect bus operators and transit personnel to support the safety and behavioral health needs that emerge on public transit. We have to work with ATU, both mechanics and drivers, to continually increase the workforce, and to continue to connect with a new generation of metro operators. In addition to providing better compensation to workers, I will also focus on improving workforce health, workforce development, and training opportunities.

To pay for this, I will champion a Countywide Transportation Benefit District to fund on-time and more frequent buses, with expanded service routes.

2. Are you in favor of the over \$600 million investments to protect workers and public safety, the environment, & ratepayer investments at the West Point Treatment Plant? How will you support increasing the resiliency of this county asset while also looking out for the residents of Magnolia immediately adjacent to the facility?
 - a. Yes, I am in favor of these investments, as they address critical environmental and safety needs. I will support increasing the resiliency of this county asset by prioritizing investments in asset management and maintenance. As the budget manager for King County's capital (i.e. construction) budgets, including the Wastewater Treatment Division, I am familiar with the challenges surrounding the West Point Treatment Plant and would be able to hit the ground running on this issue.

In addition, public safety and public involvement is a huge priority for me. By investing in the long-term health of this asset, we invest in the health of our residents and the natural environment. I will meet with residents and hold office hours and town hall conversations to make sure that concerns are understood, that project updates are provided, and that communication between my office and the community flows both ways.

3. King County released a 40-year wastewater services plan outlining strategies and costs to address our regional wastewater treatment system's future capacity, maintenance, and operational needs. Unfortunately for some, due to the plan, wastewater rates increased significantly this year. **How do you plan to address the concerns of ratepayers as the county's Clean Water Plan is implemented over the next decade?**
 - a. It is true that significant investments will be needed to address regional wastewater treatment needs. I understand the concerns of ratepayers regarding the significant increase in wastewater rates and, while this increase may be necessary to address our regional wastewater treatment system's future capacity, maintenance, and operational

needs, it is crucial to ensure that the burden does not disproportionately fall on the most vulnerable members of our community.

- I will engage in dialogue with the state and stakeholders to make sure that we use our scarce resources as responsibly as possible and that environmental standards are informed by data.
- I will also champion expanding the income-based programs that already exist to help make sure rate increases do not place a disproportionate burden on our lower-income neighbors.
- I will prioritize open and transparent communication with ratepayers, providing detailed information about the reasons behind the rate increase and the benefits it will bring in terms of improved wastewater treatment and environmental protection. I will ensure that ratepayers have access to clear and accurate information about the cost breakdown and the long-term goals of the Clean Water Plan.
- I will encourage the exploration of innovative and cost-effective solutions to improve the efficiency of our wastewater treatment system. By investing in technologies and practices that reduce operational costs and increase energy efficiency, we can minimize the long-term financial impact on ratepayers.

4. What are your views on levies impacting property owners? What statutory and constitutional changes would you advocate for, and do you want increases in property tax authorities? How do you envision the various taxing entities in King County and Seattle working together in proposing levies impacting property owners?
- a. Right now, property taxes are incredibly complex in King County. We have 750 different taxing jurisdictions, all with different rules, some of which don't have a lot of oversight. I will look at ways to streamline those jurisdictions.

Because King County has limited revenue tools compared to cities, property taxes are an essential revenue stream and part of our ability to keep up with rising costs and growing needs. I will advocate to the state to lift the 1% cap on property tax growth, which has created a significant revenue gap for the County.

In addition, I support making property taxes more progressive with a homestead exemption as a percentage of assessed value, and by broadening exemptions for lower-income homeowners.

5. The Interbay corridor and various transportation and growth-oriented planning efforts impact the 15th Avenue W corridor, the essential route to access the Magnolia peninsula's three bridges. The corridor's growth and transportation are under the jurisdiction of multiple governments, agencies, and authorities. What role do you play in helping coordinate or encourage collaboration among the numerous planning efforts affecting the 15th Ave W corridor? What are your positions regarding the Magnolia Bridge replacement, given that Metro busses depend on the bridge for the significant routes serving workers and residents working and living in Magnolia?

- a. I will use my knowledge of budgets and moving capital projects faster to collaborate and partner with the City of Seattle in delivering on this critical project. As the budget manager for King County's capital (i.e. construction) budgets, I've seen firsthand that our big capital initiatives are all facing the same barriers around permitting, procurement, supply chains, and labor shortages. I've been leading a team at King County to examine and address these barriers and would partner with the City of Seattle to make sure this essential project is prioritized and completed. In addition, I will champion a county-wide transportation benefit district that can help prevent these kinds of situations in the future.

Please respond to this questionnaire by June 22, 2023, by emailing a .pdf file of your replies to Jason Thibeaux, Executive Director, Magnolia Chamber of Commerce, at Jason@discovermagnolia.org.

In addition, if you have questions or concerns, please call Jason at 206.618.1589 or Ann Goos, Magnolia Chamber Board member and Chair, Community Engagement Committee, at agoos@seanet.com or 206.465.5136.

The questions and your unedited answers will be featured on the Magnolia Chamber of Commerce website and in a newsletter to the more than 450 Chamber members representing businesses and residents of the 4th King County Council District. So again, if possible, please send your replies in a .pdf document so our members can easily access your campaign's positions.

Thank you for your participation and your candidacy.