

2024 Board of County Commissioner Candidates for District 5

Questions were given to all candidates on May 18, 2024. All candidates were asked to respond no later than June 1, 2024. This document was produced June 14, 2024.

1. What is your background?

John Hall



I was raised by two hard working parents that instilled in their children that it is necessary to work; don't depend on anyone to give you something that was not earned. I have lived in Polk County for all of my 69 years and for 43 of those years I worked for County Government. I am married with a daughter, son and step-son. In past years I coached little league girls' softball, little league baseball and volunteered on the Board of Lighthouse for the Blind for nine years.

Mike Scott



I am a lifelong resident of Polk County. I am President/Founder/CEO of Right Trailers, Inc. A multi-location, 40+ employee company and a former fulltime civil engineering consultant (17 years experience). I am married with two children and attend Victory Church in Lakeland. My family routinely volunteers throughout the community at schools and church events.

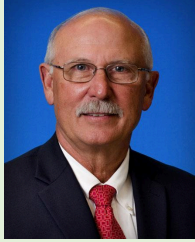
Ricky Shirah



As a lifetime resident of this community, I am deeply invested in its success and well-being. With over a decade of experience in local government and advocacy work, I have developed a comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing our county. My track record of effectively collaborating with diverse stakeholders to implement innovative solutions sets me apart as a candidate who can truly make a difference. From expanding access to affordable housing to supporting small businesses, my priorities align with the needs and aspirations of our residents. I am committed to transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in decision-making processes, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued. By voting for me as your County Commissioner, you are choosing a passionate and dedicated leader who will work tirelessly to build a stronger, more resilient community for us all. Let's move forward together towards a brighter future.

2. Why are you running for this position now?

John Hall



Polk County has grown and is continuing to grow, I believe my background in local government, along with sitting on the Southwest Florida Water Management District Board of Directors gives me an insight that my opponents do not have in responding to this growth.

Mike Scott



Polk County is growing at a rapid pace and while growth is good, if managed irresponsibly, this growth can cause future problems for our community that we can potentially avoid with the right leadership in place. I am running because as a business owner and civil engineer, I can leverage my years of experience and knowledge to bring solutions to the presented challenges that will have long-term positive impacts for the residents of our County and generations to come.

Ricky Shirah



This is my home and the home of my 4 children and their families which include my 8 grandchildren, I am concerned about the way Polk County is headed. It is projected to have a million residents in Polk County by 2030. Developers are turning every cow pasture and orange grove into subdivisions. We cannot stop growth, but we can do a better job controlling it.

3. Why should citizens vote for you specifically instead of your opponents?

John Hall



Vote for me because of my background in Polk County Government: there will be no learning curve, I will be able to “hit the ground running” on day one.

Mike Scott



I am a business owner and a professional engineer. These two professions provide an abundance of technical insight when evaluating and comprehending proposals that come before the commission. I will promote smart growth in areas of the county where existing infrastructure can support it and will promote proper planning for future growth.

Ricky Shirah



I am running for County Commissioner because it is time for a common hardworking man to represent the voices of everyday citizens. As someone who was born, raised and continues to work in this community I understand the true struggles and concerns of the people who also call this county home. I believe that true change comes from those who have faced the same challenges as constituents, not from career politicians who are disconnected from reality. I am committed to transparency, accountability, and integrity in all aspects of governance. My vision for this county is one where every resident has access to quality education, affordable healthcare, and economic opportunities. It's time for a leader who will fight tirelessly for the working class and prioritize the needs of our community above all else. Vote for me as your county commissioner, and together we can create a better future for us all.

4. What do you believe are the most important (not necessarily urgent) challenges/priorities facing Polk County and the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC)?

John Hall



Transportation; our growth has led to some transportation issues and I will work to find and implement solutions for this issue; Water; we need to ensure that our current and future generations have a clean adequate water supply; Public Safety, the County, in previous surveys were told by our citizens that public safety is high on their priority list, everyone wants to feel safe where they live and if it becomes necessary to dial 911 a trained safety professional will show up to offer assistance; Development, we need to make sure that we are using smart development practices as Polk County continues to grow.

Mike Scott



The biggest issues facing the residents of Polk County are growth and infrastructure. The county is comprised of a diverse population that desire different homesteads. If elected, I would aggressively seek to modify the development guidelines to promote smart growth that would encourage infill and provide adequate emergency services for the increased population.

Ricky Shirah



Growth management, infrastructure improvements, affordable housing, good high-paying jobs and good roads for any future growth. Bring Brightline to Polk County for rail between Orlando and Tamps with stops in Polk County.

5. Given Polk’s recent record-breaking growth, what plan and what timeline should the BoCC follow in terms of impact fees and curbing growth in a way to allow planning experts to aid in distribution and placement of homes, citizens, and county facilities?

John Hall



Polk County hires professionals periodically to perform impact fee studies to insure that our impact fees are in line with current market impact fees. The County has a professional planning staff that reviews all development submittals to make sure they comply with the Land Development Code and the Polk County Comprehensive Plan.

Mike Scott



If elected, I can make a difference by imparting my technical expertise as a civil engineer and business owner to correct the current trajectory of overgrowth in some areas that lack the necessary infrastructure to support the new population. Transportation impact fees are already set to increase on July 1, 2024 and July 1, 2025. Impact fees are not the only, or in some cases the best, tool to use in curbing growth. I will opine on best options after a more comprehensive review of the existing plans in place and staff input.

Ricky Shirah



Given Polk County’s unprecedented growth, the PCBC faces a critical juncture requiring a strategic plan to manage development while ensuring sustainable and equitable growth. This plan must prioritize a comprehensive approach that balances economic prosperity with responsible land use. In terms of impact fees, the PCBC should implement a tiered system increasing fees based on the intensity of development and the demands placed on infrastructure. This would encourage developers to prioritize projects that minimize strain on existing services and allow for targeted investments in infrastructure improvements. Additionally, the PCBC should establish a clear timeline for implementing these fee changes, providing developers with adequate notice and opportunity to adapt. To curb growth, the PCBC should consider adopting a phased development approach, allowing for controlled growth in specific areas while preserving sensitive ecosystems and natural resources. This approach would require the PCBC to engage with planning experts to identify optimal locations for future development, prioritizing areas with existing infrastructure and minimizing environmental impact. This strategic placement of homes and facilities would foster a more balanced distribution of residents and services, mitigating the strain on existing communities. Lastly, the PCBC should prioritize public engagement and transparency throughout this process. Regular public forums and online platforms would provide citizens with opportunities to voice their concerns and participate in shaping the county’s future. By fostering collaboration between stakeholders, the PCBC can ensure that growth in Polk County is managed sustainably, equitably, and in a manner that benefits all residents.

6. How can municipalities and city governments within Polk County work more effectively with the County Commission, and what are the best steps citizens can take to have their voices and concerns heard by the BoCC?

John Hall



City Governments and Polk County Government work well with each other; a perfect example of governmental cooperation is the Polk Regional Water Cooperative where the County and Cities are working to insure an adequate water supply for the future.

Mike Scott



Polk County works well with municipalities and city governments currently. As with any relationship, more communication is better and I will actively seek feedback from the other municipalities on areas of improvement. I will be accessible to citizens so their voices and concerns can be heard, but will also evaluate the ease of, or lack thereof, communication with the PCBC.

Ricky Shirah



I am thrilled about the potential for increased collaboration between municipalities and city governments within Polk County and the county itself. By working more effectively together, these entities can achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services to residents and promoting economic growth across the region. To enhance this collaboration, it is essential for all parties to establish clear communication channels, share resources, and align their strategic priorities. By leveraging each other's strengths and expertise municipalities can tap in the county's vast resources while also contributing valuable insights from their local perspectives. If you want to make sure your voice is heard loud and clear by the Commissioners, there are a few key steps you can take to get their attention. First off don't be afraid to reach out directly to your local commissioner through emails, phone calls, or even social media. They are there to represent you and address your concerns, so do not hesitate to make your opinions known. It is also important to get involved in community meetings and events where commissioner may be present – this way you are able to speak with then directly. Additionally, consider gathering support from friends, neighbors, or community organizations who share similar concerns – there is strength in numbers! By being proactive and persistent in voicing your concerns, you can increase your chances of making a real impact on decision making at a local level.

7. Where can people go to get more information about you and/or your campaign?

John Hall



My website and Facebook page will be up [on Monday]. Search for me on Facebook and my website information will be there.

<https://www.facebook.com/Johnhall4polkcounty/>

Mike Scott



www.votemikescott.com

Ricky Shirah



www.voterickyshirah.com