

2026 Polk County Commission Seat 4

Surveys were sent on June 13 and all candidate responses were received prior to June 30. This document was published July 4, 2026.

Prepared by Citizens Support Services Lake Wales.

1. What is your background? Why are you running for county commissioner now, and what are your qualifications?

Omar Arroyo



I have proudly called Haines City home since 2001, and Polk County has given me everything, my family, my business, and the opportunity to serve. My wife and I have been married for over 20 years, and together we are raising our three children here in Polk County. Giving back to the community that has blessed my family is the reason I first ran for Haines City Commission and why I am now running for Polk County Commission. During my time as Commissioner, Vice Mayor, and Mayor, I worked to improve infrastructure, strengthen public safety, and support projects that improve the quality of life for our residents. I believe our youth are one of our greatest responsibilities, and we must continue creating parks, recreational opportunities, and family-friendly spaces where they can grow and thrive. As a business owner, I understand the importance of creating good jobs while ensuring growth is responsible and protects our communities, natural resources, and wildlife. My goal is to help make Polk County the best place to raise a family, build a business, and create opportunities for future generations.

Elisha Gresham



My background consists of marriage, successfully raising 3 young adult children & over 39 years' experience in providing public services & advocating for children, their families & communities. I have worked in many career fields & can relate to most of our voters regarding both their concerns & success. I'm also a Florida State Notary Public. My public/community services in addition to entrepreneurship, dates back to 1987 (39 years' experience). From that time on & moving forward, I have also acquired a CDL & always believed in helping others to achieve what they may need. As of 2026, I not only successfully advocated 3 years for a long overdue traffic light at Ronald Reagan & Heritage Pass in Davenport, which successfully went into full operation on February 17, 2026 but, I also decided to run for Polk County's Board of Commissioners.

I decided to run for County Commissioner because myself & many others on both sides of the political fence have grown tired of seeing our local government disregard the wishes of voters, not listening, waste tax payer's money, forget who put them in office, to stop the constant & needlessly paying of property taxes & increased property taxes which, causes a negative domino reaction on many home/landowners

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such as, homelessness; additionally, I decided to run for office to help our retired population & our young adults prosper; I'm running to help bring back stability/affordability to our communities/county & restore sensible spending by implementing a more improved system of "Checks & Balances". I am also running so that we can improve/combat the high costs of utilities, groceries & insurance. I also support the elimination of property taxes on the primary homes which will **not** take away the funding for our teachers and 1st responders. It just takes a proper budget & effective negotiation, not adding/considering Data Centers & other unnecessary building structures/land development which can drive up taxes & push to retain property taxes which also goes against the wishes of the voters. Further, our teachers & 1st responders are currently financially struggling & underpaid & the property taxes haven't even been cut yet; in fact, the property taxes have been increased so, then why are our teachers & 1st responders **currently still** financially struggling? This was just to name a few. I am running so property owners don't have to continue paying 2 different entities money to provide the same services & aren't somehow "strongarmed" out of their properties by our government. I'm running to prevent continued community division by some of our local leaders which, for many decades, have conquered & torn down many good solid communities & their families. I am running to preserve our natural environments & wildlife. I'm running to make it make sense.

Further, although I'm new to running for a political office, I'm not new to being involved with getting things done within our communities, working across the board in a team effort to help bring about change that would improve the living standards for local families & their communities. In addition to negotiating, I had to travel for contracting purposes to produce better outcomes for communities. I'm a people-oriented person, responsible, enjoy being involved with the people/communities, pride myself on professionalism & I would insist on nothing less from county administrative staff members when engaging with our citizens; I actually care about people, the communities & the budget. I have been in this field of advocating for improved community changes for well over 35 years. And again, in addition to the above mentioned, this was just a few attributes & experiences mentioned I possess that would more than qualify me for the role of County Commissioner.

2. What service organizations do you support with your time and money?

Omar Arroyo



Service has always been a priority in my life. I currently serve on the boards of HCA Florida Poinciana Hospital, Central Florida Health Care, United Way of Central Florida, and the American Heart Association, as well as regional transportation, infrastructure, and Florida League of Cities committees. I am also the founder of the Hispanic Empowerment Foundation, which raises funds to award at least ten scholarships each year to students pursuing college or skilled trades, and the Latin Republican Club, which encourages civic engagement and community involvement. Beyond that, I volunteer and financially support local nonprofits focused on community outreach, youth, and mental health, a cause that is especially meaningful to my family. I believe leadership is about serving others, and I will continue bringing that commitment to Polk County.

Elisha Gresham



I am currently not involved with any organizations.

3. What do you feel are the 2 most critical issues that need to be addressed as a board member? What do you believe are the most important (not necessarily urgent) challenges/priorities facing Polk County and the County Commission?

Omar Arroyo



Polk County is growing rapidly, and our biggest responsibility is making sure our infrastructure keeps pace with that growth. We must continue supporting our Sheriff's Office, firefighters, and first responders to ensure our families remain safe, while also investing in roads, transportation, water, and other critical infrastructure. I also believe we must create high-quality jobs so our children and grandchildren can build successful careers right here in Polk County. Supporting our youth through parks, recreational facilities, and family friendly amenities is an investment in our future. Finally, we must protect our natural resources, lakes, and wildlife so future generations can enjoy the same quality of life we do today.

Elisha Gresham



I feel the 2 most critical issues that need to be addressed as a board member are:

- Supporting the abolishment of the property taxes to help make living more affordable
- The high cost of utilities

The most important challenges facing Polk County, not necessarily urgent, and the County Commission are:

- Improving living standards/status for our seniors/disabled populations
 - Preventing increased homelessness
 - The need to reduce building permits
 - Community/County overdevelopment
 - Data Center projects; data centers would bring more financial hardship/burden & become a nuisance for surrounding communities
 - Responsibly Improve our road infrastructures due to constant congestion
 - Rising costs of insurance
 - AI taking over of human jobs which, will drive up the unemployment rate as well as, many other unwanted results
 - Avoiding gentrification
 - Stopping property owners from having to pay 2 different entities for the same services
- And so much more...

4. How do you view Tallahassee’s involvement in our local community? “overreach” or “necessary support”? Why do you take this view?

Omar Arroyo



I believe 100% in home rule because local leaders know their communities best. Local voices should make local choices, and what works for Miami may not work for Polk County. The State should be a partner by providing funding, resources, and support, not by making decisions that belong at the local level. We should continue working with Tallahassee to secure funding for transportation, infrastructure, water, public safety, and economic development projects that benefit our residents. As your County Commissioner, I will always fight to protect local decision making while building strong relationships to bring resources back to Polk County.

Elisha Gresham



That would depend on the office/department. There are departments that provide a positive involvement and other departments that aren’t involved enough or cause a negative involvement. I don’t see overreach as much as I see the lack of involvement. I take this view because, there have been many situations the Tallahassee office departments could have been more helpful to the public/community but, in some cases may have chosen to take a “backseat” or a “hands-off” approach/position. Personally, I feel Tallahassee’s fair and just involvement regarding certain matters, could bring about more positive outcomes in certain situations.

5. What is your opinion on Data Centers?

Omar Arroyo



I believe decisions of this magnitude should be made carefully and based on facts, not assumptions. Before supporting or opposing data centers, I want to better understand the concerns surrounding water use, power demand, noise, traffic, and their overall impact on nearby communities. I would like to visit existing data centers in other states to see firsthand how they operate and learn what has worked well and what has not. If Polk County considers these projects, we must ensure they are responsible, protect our natural resources, and do not place an unfair burden on our infrastructure or residents. I will never rush a decision without doing the research and making sure it is in the best interest of Polk County and future generations.

Elisha Gresham



I reject Data Centers being built in our communities & forced to share our utilities which will eventually cause too much stress & strain on our utilities. Data Centers can also produce a non-stop noise that can be heard possibly up to 2 – 5 miles away which could also be a violation of the county code noise ordinance. Data Centers can sometimes also possibly contaminate the drinking water. In short, Data Centers are more problematic & costly than they are beneficial. I hope somehow, if they feel Data Centers will one day become that great of a need, then hopefully they can be built on some remote island somewhere away from our communities & aren't sharing our utilities & should pay their own taxes. Further, those who have tried to sell their homes or businesses that may have been located within range of a Data Center has been pretty much unsuccessful; meaning, they also can drive down the values within the regions because in some cases, stores/shops have closed or moved someplace else due to the Data Centers. There are already too many complaints & flaws regarding Data Centers with no resolution to those complaints/concerns & I certainly wouldn't want that for our citizens, as our citizens have already expressed the same. Even Elon Musk hinted at Data Centers needing to be somewhere up in space & I agree; so, even someone like Elon Musk has some kind of knowledge/common sense about the projected hazards & harmful impact Data Centers can bring down on communities as well as, the environment. Additionally, there's not been enough time to conduct proper long-term studies/research as to the possible effects/damages Data Centers could pose & what other unknown issues could possibly be laying dormant somewhere waiting to come into existence or happen as a result of Data Centers.

6. What is your position on growth and infrastructure in our district? How can we grow our communities better?

Omar Arroyo



Growth is inevitable, but it must be planned responsibly. I believe growth should pay for growth by ensuring roads, water, sewer, public safety, and other critical infrastructure keep pace with new development. We must also attract high-quality employers that create good-paying jobs for our residents. At the same time, we cannot forget who we are by protecting our natural resources, investing in our wildlife corridor, and preserving the character and quality of life that make Polk County special. Smart growth means building a stronger future without losing our identity.

Elisha Gresham



In order to improve our infrastructure, we will need better planning prior to approving building permits. Because building more homes & other business buildings/structures brings about a higher volume of traffic, we must 1st make sure our road infrastructure can handle the studied & projected volume of increased traffic these sorts of building projects will bring. Better planning will also help grow our communities by 1st creating a more effective & community-based spending budget for our communities in addition to cutting out all other unnecessary wasteful spending.

7. How would you balance preserving traditions while adapting to the interests and needs of future generations?

Omar Arroyo



I don't believe we have to choose between preserving our traditions and embracing the future. Times change, and while some of our agricultural communities have faced challenges beyond their control, we should do everything we can to preserve our agricultural heritage, rural character, and natural resources. At the same time, we must continue creating opportunities for future generations through good jobs, parks, recreation, education, and smart economic development. By respecting our past while planning wisely for the future, we can ensure Polk County continues to grow without losing the values and character that make it special.

Elisha Gresham



To balance preserving traditions while adapting to the interest & needs of future generations, I would begin with, if the current traditions are providing sound & healthy benefits for us now then, as we move forward in life/time we will gradually make any necessary adjustments to the current traditions accordingly, as needed.

8. 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?

Omar Arroyo



Thanks to my service as a City Commissioner, Vice Mayor, and Mayor, I have built strong relationships with elected officials throughout Polk County. I plan to regularly attend city commission meetings across our county to hear directly from local leaders and the residents they represent. I believe communication, collaboration, and mutual respect are essential to solving regional challenges. I will always listen carefully, but I also believe leaders must have the courage to make decisions based on facts and the long-term best interests of our community, not simply the loudest voices in the room. My commitment is to represent all of Polk County with fairness, consistency, and common sense.

Elisha Gresham



Municipalities & city governments within Polk County can work more effectively with the County Commission by way of consistent communication, setting aside & omitting party differences & having productive in-person meetings. Citizens should continue writing letters, emailing, calling, using social media & attending community meetings/any scheduled public hearings to have their voices heard by the BoCC.

9. What are your budget priorities?

Omar Arroyo



My budget priorities are public safety, infrastructure, and responsible financial management. We must focus on the needs of our community before the wants, making sure every tax dollar is spent wisely and delivers real value to our residents. That means continuing to invest in our Sheriff's Office, firefighters, first responders, roads, water, and other critical infrastructure while keeping pace with growth. I also believe in investing in parks and recreational opportunities that strengthen families and improve quality of life. My commitment is to protect taxpayers by making thoughtful, transparent decisions that put Polk County's long-term needs first.

Elisha Gresham



My budget priorities are simple; making sure the best productive/beneficial budget is allocated towards the people, their families & communities first.

10. Why should citizens vote for you specifically instead of your opponent?

Omar Arroyo



I am not running for this office because of a title. I am running because I love Polk County and want to give back to the community that has given so much to my family. I bring the perspective of a business owner, a husband, a father, and a proven public servant who understands the importance of listening, working hard, and delivering results. I will always put our residents first, protect taxpayers, support public safety, and fight for smart growth that preserves our quality of life. I would be honored to earn your trust and your vote, and I promise to serve Polk County with integrity, transparency, and common sense.

Elisha Gresham



Just to name a few, citizens should vote for me because I respect the needs & concerns of voters; I respect the value of a dollar; I will listen to the voters, prevent AI from taking over jobs, reject Data Centers, provide more affordable living standards by supporting the abolishment of property taxes just as a start towards more affordable living; institute a more improved budget and accounting system of “Checks & Balances”; Improve communications with other municipalities & city governments. Additionally, I will make certain that our teachers & 1st responders are continuously well supported/funded. I also will improve traffic/driving conditions, put firm restrictions in place before building permits can be approved, prevent gentrification, prevent community overdevelopment, put in more productive & effective infrastructure planning; I will decrease homelessness & crime. I will negotiate for lower insurance costs, improve living standards & conditions for our seniors, disabled populations & their care providers; I will be tough on price gouging across all fields of goods & services; also, a vote for me is a vote for themselves in addition to, so much more.

11. Where can people get more information about you and/or your campaign?

Omar Arroyo



You can follow my campaign on Facebook at facebook.com/electomararroyo, where I regularly share campaign updates, community events, and important information. You can also visit ElectOmarArroyo.com to learn more about my priorities, stay updated on the campaign, and find additional ways to contact me. I always welcome your questions, ideas, and feedback because I believe good leadership starts with listening.

Elisha Gresham



In addition to Citizens Support Services of Lake Wales, people can also get more information about me/my campaign through the Polk County Supervisor of Elections at <https://www.polkelections.gov>, my YouTube channel: Elisha Gresham or via Facebook under Elisha Gresham. They can also message me directly through Facebook or comment on one of my amateur YouTube videos.