

2026 Polk County Commission Seat 2

Surveys were sent on June 13 and all candidate responses were received prior to July 3. 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?

Kelly Quinn



I am a third-generation Polk County resident, artist, designer, small business owner, conservation communicator, and civic advocate. I grew up with a deep love for Polk's lakes, wetlands, rural lands, wildlife, and working landscapes. Professionally, my work has focused on helping organizations communicate complex land, water, wildlife, and planning issues clearly to the public and political decision-makers.

I'm running now because Polk is at a turning point. Growth decisions being made today will shape our drinking water, infrastructure, taxes, rural communities, and quality of life for generations. My qualifications include lived experience in Polk, professional communication and problem-solving skills, service on the Polk County Comprehensive Plan citizen committee, and a practical understanding of land use, conservation, infrastructure, and public engagement.

Rick Wilson



I was born and raised in Bartow and am a lifetime resident. My wife, Teresa, and I have been married for 45 1/2 years and have three adult children and two grandsons all of whom have been raised right here. My business background is in the ranching and citrus businesses. I'm a partner in a business named, AgriQuip, that manufactures and sells an implement called the Chop-Zilla that is used for overgrowth control of brush on fence lines and along roads and around power lines, etc. My personal and professional pursuits also included time as a professional NASCAR driver. I am running for re-election to the Polk County Commission because I've been able to accomplish some very good things during my time on the commission and look forward to serving another term to continue to do so.

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

Kelly Quinn



My service has primarily been through time, professional skills, public education, and community advocacy. I have supported conservation, land and water protection, wildlife corridor awareness, local planning engagement, and civic education efforts by helping translate complex issues into clear public communication. As a small business owner, I have not always had large financial resources to give, but I have consistently contributed my time, voice, research, design skills, and community organizing efforts to causes that protect Polk's land, water, rural character, and quality of life for over a decade.

Rick Wilson



Service Organizations: Haven Worship Center is where my family and I enjoy attending for not just worship, but we enjoy going out in the community each year to serve as part of the serve team. I'm a member of the Bartow Rotary. I'm a supporter of the Polk County Youth Fair and many of the exhibitors. I enjoy supporting the Keep Polk County Beautiful organization, and in that effort, I regularly offer my business location as a place to bring old tires so that they may be disposed of properly. This has been a very successful event that I'm proud to be a part of.

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?

Kelly Quinn



The two most critical issues are drinking water protection and infrastructure accountability.

First, drinking water must be Polk's number one priority. Growth, industrial uses, hyper scale data-centers, mining, wastewater, stormwater, and land-use decisions all affect our aquifer, lakes, wetlands, and long-term water supply. We need watershed-first planning and stronger protection of aquifer recharge areas.

Second, infrastructure must keep pace with growth. Roads, drainage, utilities, fire/EMS, public safety, and emergency access should be planned alongside development, not after residents are already burdened. Growth should pay its fair share, and impact fees should be transparent and directed back toward the areas most strained by growth and who fall in the immediate radius of growth.

The most important long-term challenge is whether Polk can grow without losing what makes it livable. That means protecting drinking water, rural land, agriculture, wildlife corridors, wetlands, and community character while still supporting jobs, housing, and opportunity.

The County Commission should focus on resilient planning, stronger county-city coordination, whole-impact review for major projects, Rural by Design standards, voluntary PDR/TDR tools, green infrastructure, and transparent budgeting. Polk needs a long-term stewardship mindset so decisions are not made parcel by parcel, but with a clear understanding of cumulative impacts on taxpayers, water, roads, public safety, and future generations.

Rick Wilson



The proposed referendum on property taxes if approved by the voters in November will provide challenges for the Commission. Balancing growth and infrastructure demand while protecting our natural resources are, and will always be, the critical issues for the Board of County Commissioners.

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

Kelly Quinn



It depends on the issue. Tallahassee can provide necessary support when it helps fund infrastructure, conservation, emergency preparedness, water protection, housing, and disaster recovery. State resources can be important, especially for fast-growing counties like Polk.

But I am concerned when state policy removes local decision-making, weakens public input, preempts local planning standards, or forces communities to accept impacts without local control. Polk residents understand their roads, water, neighborhoods, farms, and rural areas better than anyone. I support state partnership, but not one-size-fits-all overreach that limits local accountability or silences local concerns.

Rick Wilson



There are times that Tallahassee has "over reached" on issues that are best a local decision. I will continue to work with our state partners to make sure that Polk County needs are met.

5. What is your opinion on Data Centers?

Kelly Quinn



I believe public health comes first and I support a minimum one-year moratorium on hyper scale data centers until Polk has clear standards for siting, water use, closed-loop cooling, energy demand, backup generators, noise, air impacts, infrastructure costs, emergency services, public disclosure, and no cost-shifting onto residents. Any proposal should undergo a full whole-impact review and be prohibited from sensitive recharge, rural, and residential areas.

Hyperscale data centers are high-impact industrial uses and must be treated that way. They can require enormous amounts of energy, water planning, utility infrastructure, backup power, land, and emergency service capacity. Polk should not approve them casually or disguise them as ordinary warehouses or light industrial projects.

Rick Wilson



Like all of us, I am learning the pros and cons of Data Centers and I believe we must develop a policy that balances how and if these centers are placed and what strain they may put on our infrastructure.

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

Kelly Quinn



Growth should be planned around drinking water, infrastructure capacity, public safety, and community character. Too often, residents experience growth as traffic, drainage problems, school pressure, utility strain, road safety concerns, and loss of rural land. That is not good planning.

We can grow better by directing development near existing services, requiring major projects to address roads, drainage, utilities, fire/EMS, emergency access, and public safety up front, and using Rural by Design standards where rural areas are affected. I also support transparent impact fee tracking, stronger interlocal coordination with cities, green infrastructure, conservation design, and voluntary PDR/TDR tools to protect farms, wetlands, recharge areas, and wildlife corridors.

Rick Wilson



We must continue to be diligent that infrastructure is in place before allowing more development.

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

Kelly Quinn



Polk's traditions are rooted in land, water, agriculture, small towns, family, local service, and a strong sense of place. Preserving those traditions does not mean rejecting change; it means guiding change so future generations inherit a county that is still healthy, affordable, connected, and recognizable.

I would balance both by protecting drinking water, farms, rural communities, lakes, wetlands, and wildlife corridors while supporting jobs, housing options, infrastructure, and technology that fit Polk's long-term needs. Future generations deserve opportunity, but they also deserve clean water, safe roads, access to nature, and communities with identity.

Rick Wilson



Every decision we make as Commissioners, I always have in mind the interests and needs that will be of the generations to come.

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?

Kelly Quinn



Polk County and its municipalities need stronger coordination on annexation, water supply, roads, emergency services, utilities, stormwater, high-impact industrial uses, and development near rural communities. I support more interlocal agreements, shared infrastructure planning, joint workshops, clearer maps, and earlier review of projects with countywide impacts.

Citizens can be most effective by getting involved early: sign up for public notices, track Planning Commission and BoCC agendas, contact commissioners before hearings, submit written comments, attend workshops, request to be on citizen committees, organize neighbors around specific facts, and ask clear questions about water, traffic, drainage, public safety, and long-term costs. Public input should be easier to access and harder to ignore.

Rick Wilson



We currently have an excellent working relationship I believe with all of our Polk County municipal partners. Citizens voice their concerns through many avenues of communication and appearances at the Board meetings that all effect my decision as a member.

9. What are your budget priorities?

Kelly Quinn



My first budget priority is protecting drinking water and the natural systems that support it, including aquifer recharge, wetlands, stormwater, and green infrastructure. Second is infrastructure accountability: roads, drainage, utilities, fire/EMS, public safety, and emergency access must keep pace with growth.

I would also prioritize transparency in impact fees, better tracking of where growth-related dollars are collected and spent, maintenance of existing infrastructure before overextending into new areas, and investments that reduce long-term taxpayer costs. Budget decisions should be practical, transparent, and tied to public health, safety, water, infrastructure, and quality of life.

Rick Wilson



Keeping taxes low and the budget balanced. Maintaining reserves and investing in public safety and infrastructure needs.

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

Kelly Quinn



I am offering a different kind of leadership: practical, resident-focused, and grounded in long-term stewardship. I am not running to protect the status quo. I am running because residents deserve a commissioner who will ask harder questions before growth is approved, put drinking water first, demand infrastructure accountability, listen early, and consider the full impacts on taxpayers, rural communities, public safety, and future generations.

My background in conservation communication, small business, public engagement, and land-use advocacy gives me a unique ability to connect complex issues to real community concerns. I will bring transparency, preparation, energy, and a fresh perspective to the County Commission.

Rick Wilson



I am excited at the prospect of being able to continue my work as the Chair of the Conservation Land Acquisition Selection Advisory Committee (CLASAC) as, I and the CLASAC board members, work diligently in finding the best properties to present to the County Commission for the purpose of acquisition through the Environmental Lands Program resulting in preservation and protection of large tracts of environmentally sensitive areas. This is an endeavor that was voted on and approved by our citizens. My love and interest in the work of this committee is not just for the here and now, but it's for the generations to come, and it's my heart's desire to do the best job possible for as long as possible and being a County Commissioner allows me the privilege to continue my work in this area.

I also look forward to continuing to proactively be a strong supporter of Sheriff Grady Judd and the Polk County Sheriff's Office in their mission of being the best; the strongest; and the well-documented single most effective law enforcement agency in our country. I have been a staunch supporter of the Sheriff's Office through my first two terms and I intend to continue to uphold that commitment. My concern in a strong law enforcement atmosphere is not just the safety of our current residents, but also for the future well-being of our grandchildren and the generations to come. The safety all of us and future citizens is dependent on the continued strength of our law enforcement agencies; I believe the importance of this cannot be overstated.

As the sitting commissioner that pushed for a rewrite of Polk's Comprehensive Plan in the hope of giving our county an improved plan that would better serve our community and its future, it is my hope to continue that effort to fruition.

These are but a few of the countless important areas in which a commissioner works for and I believe my time on the commission gives me the real-life experience to properly deal with many decisions that will need to be made for the best results possible. They are not simple or always easy decisions to make, but they require understanding that comes with experience and the knowledge that comes with that experience.

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

Kelly Quinn



People can learn more about me, my priorities, upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and ways to support the campaign at:

www.kellyforpolk.com

Voters can also follow @KellyforPolk on social media for updates, videos, event notices, and issue explanations.

I encourage residents to reach out directly through the campaign website or via direct message on social platforms with questions, concerns, local issues, or ideas. This campaign is about listening to Polk residents and building a more resilient future together.

Rick Wilson



I can be reached through [Facebook/Rick4Polk](https://www.facebook.com/Rick4Polk) or Email: rwi6262@gmail.com