

Questions for JC Hospital District Commissioner candidates compiled from members of the Citizens for Healthcare Access (CHA) and Indivisible PT Huddle Healthcare group.

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS BY BRUCE McCOMAS

Q. What is the reason you are running for Hospital District Commissioner? *To give back to the community, to promote quality, affordable healthcare, close to home.*

What relevant experiences do you have?

*36 years business & management exp., 7 years on the school board, 5 plus years on the Hospital Financial advisory committee, served on the founding board for 3 non-profit organizations, currently on 3 committees at the Hospital. Spent last 6 years dealing with healthcare systems, and insurance companies as a caregiver and patient advocate for my wife as she battled cancer.*

Q. What is the most important thing you think the Hospital District should be doing over the next year?

*Stay focused on their goals and objectives while staying in touch with what is happening nationally with reimbursement programs. Continue to improve safety, quality, and affordability of healthcare. Look for ways to provide Universal Healthcare for all within the Hospital District.*

Q. What do you feel the role of a Hospital District Commissioner is or should be? Especially in light of this hospital being a publicly owned hospital?

*To set policy and direction for the District, and monitor performance. Ensure financial viability of the District. Be and advocate for the District and represent the community, **the customers' of the Hospital District.***

Q. Are you aware of the four county "community health priorities?" If so, what do you think the district commissioners can do to help support these goals?

Access to mental health and chemical dependency care

Chronic disease prevention

Access to care

Immunizations

Collaborate with other agencies and take the lead where appropriate. The CEO is the head of this effort for the Hospital.

Q. Have you read the Community Health Improvement Plan? What are your thoughts on it? Is there anything you would change in it? Is there any specific area of concern in it?

Yes. It is very comprehensive and ambitious with 13 goals, 38 objectives, and 105 strategies. The Commission is only one party to this collaboration.

Demographics, age, avg. income level, poverty %, unemployment % are areas of concern for our county.

Q. Have you ever worked in the delivery of healthcare? Have you worked in public health? Have you participated in healthcare or public health policy? What was your role in those contributions?

**Not as a vocation only as an avocation. I served on the Hospital Financial advisory committee for 5 years. I'm currently on 3 committees at JHC; Oncology Support Committee, Patient & Family Advisory Committee, and the Patient Financial Experience Task Force. I have given input from a Patient / caregiver view point from 6 years of interaction with JHC, SCCA, Olympic Radiation, numerous insurance companies and multiple billing offices. When I was at the paper mill I was on the Medical**

## Benefits Committee for 300 union & non-union employees.

Q. Do you feel there are any particular issues that you would bring to the discussions in the Commissioners meetings that are not currently being addressed? If so, what are they?  
How to do more with less money while keeping the District financially viable.

Q. Are you aware of the difference in prices between Jefferson Healthcare and other providers both here on the Peninsula and elsewhere? Do you think it is a concern?  
Yes, costs are always a concern. It is not always possible to compare apples to apples; what is in a charge and what **isn't**. **Continue to focus on ways to reduce costs** while looking at total value not just price. This is a very complex issue.

Q. Do you support repealing the ACA or fixing it? If you would favor repeal, what do you envision for a replacement? Do you support the House Republican passed bill? Why or why not?  
I think it should have been fixed. Reduce or eliminate what was wrong with it and add things that would have made it better. Too many people are left out of Republican bill and cost will be higher for most that are still in.

Q. Where do you get your healthcare and/or your health insurance? Did that change with the Affordable Care Act?  
Medicare plus a supplement. ACA allowed me to retire early to take care of my wife. There was no exclusion for her pre-existing condition and I **didn't have to worry about** the mill eliminating retiree plan. Even with good insurance we spent over \$ 30,000/year the past 3 years for out of pocket medical expenses.

Q. People in our community sometimes have to make a choice between essentials such as food and rent or paying **for a doctor's visit** or medicine. Other may be struggling with mental health or drug issues. What background do you bring to the Hospital District Commissioners that can help in policy discussions around these issues? [On the Patient Financial Experience task force](#), one of the things being reviewed is expansion of charity care and these issues. I have a history of partnering with other groups to help meet needs, for example, Habitat for Humanity, the Education Foundation, and the Community Foundation.

Q. What is your position **on a person's right to make end of life decisions**?  
[It's none of my business.](#)

Q. What is your position on a **woman's right to choose**?  
[It's none of my business; it is between a woman and her doctor.](#)

Q. Are you familiar with the policies of JCH regarding **women's health care**? **Do you have concerns about these policies**?  
[Yes. No, I believe they were thoroughly discussed and are in line with State requirements.](#)

Q. Are you familiar with the services being offered through **the Women's Health Clinic at Jefferson** County Hospital in Port Townsend? Do you have any concerns about these services? Any that are not being offered you would suggest?  
[I am somewhat familiar, the clinic is pretty new. They have a pretty comprehensive list of services.](#)

Q. Are there any further positions you would like to clarify for us, and if so, what are they? Any thoughts on

relevant healthcare topics not covered here that you are passionate about?

**Al Bergstein**

**Chair - Jefferson County Citizens for Healthcare Access**