

Questions from Together Colorado and ECHO	Elaine Shively	Ashley Stolzmann
<p>1. Given that there is a national and local crisis in the incidence and severity of mental health issues facing many individuals and families: As a commissioner, what role do you expect to play in helping to keep our community mentally healthy, especially at times of crisis?</p>	<p>1. I plan to continue as a champion for mental health, from spearheading innovative programs to provide services and support, to destigmatizing mental illness whenever possible. Supporting the development of the new Behavioral Health Hub for Boulder County is an absolute priority.</p>	<p>1. Boulder County is responsible for health and human services. As commissioner, I will support programs for mental health services by advocating for additional funding through the budget process. I will also work with State and Federal legislators to increase their funding to provide affordable or free mental health services. I will work with the sheriff's office to make sure that people in mental health crisis are connected with mental health resources and don't end up in the criminal justice system.</p>
<p>2. Given the shortage of affordable housing in Boulder: As a commissioner, what role do you expect to play in addressing the affordable housing shortage?</p>	<p>2. If Boulder County is to address affordability, we must take significant steps in tackling it from all angles. This means leveraging resources with municipalities to increase housing stock, reviewing the housing code in unincorporated County properties to allow for more options (like ADUs), and working with landlords to provide more affordable units.</p>	<p>2. The County Commission is also the county housing authority. I will work with the local communities to add additional affordable housing. In Louisville we were able to partner with the County to add 200 units of permanently affordable housing in the Kestrel development. As mayor, I championed our first ever inclusionary zoning ordinance. Through efforts like these, we will follow our plan that each community has supported to get to 12% permanently affordable housing through adding new units. I am committed to a program of action around adding new affordable homes, purchasing and deed restricting existing housing, land banking, and public private partnerships.</p>
<p>Mental Health Care Questions</p>		
<p>1. What are your thoughts about sustained funding for the Boulder County Behavioral Health Hub to put into place its plan to provide navigation to the justice system, mental health field, and general public?</p>	<p>1. We must commit sustained funding to the new hub, which I've been a part of developing for a few years. Boulder County is known for effectively securing grant funding for projects, but that often isn't long-term. To ensure that sufficient resources are always available, the Commissioners must commit to fully fund services during and throughout implementation.</p>	<p>1. We need to listen to our communities: when it comes to mental health right now, people are telling us that they are not getting the support and services that they need. This is a very complex issue with many dimensions. I am supportive of the hubs and the hub concept, but I think it's also important to recognize the need for service delivery in other ways (in schools, in the community) to meet people's needs and to help prevent them from entering the justice system. I am supportive of funding health services.</p>

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<p>2. What role do you see for the County Commissioners in leading the BOCO Staff to develop and implement a multi-year Boulder County road map to address the mental health crisis?</p>	<p>2. The greatest role the County Commissioners can play is to direct staff to develop such a road map, commit resources to ensure its successful implementation, and be prepared to remove any barriers. The County has incredible staff with the skills and expertise in mental health to be able to develop such a plan and need Commissioners who are ready to support it.</p>	<p>2. Community members often tell me they are tired of planning and they feel a real lack of action. I think we need to implement solutions our health experts are calling for including providing adequate funding and resources to existing programs. As we provide resources, we need to listen to the community and staff and course correct when things are not working. In my experience in governmental budgeting, I have had success with implementing programmatic budgeting where we, as a community, set program metrics. If we are not hitting the targets, it gives us the ability to course correct through programming and funding changes to meet community expectations. Our multi year approach to our mental health crisis should be a housing first approach. Too many people experience mental health issues and substance use disorders do not have stable housing. The county should work to expand access to permanent, affordable and supportive housing with easily accessible mental and physical health services.</p>
<p>3. What can the County do to provide countywide, 24/7 mental health crisis responders, separate from, and in addition to, police-based co-responder programs?</p>	<p>3. The behavioral health hub provides significant opportunities for just that, allowing individuals to request assistance outside of traditional emergency response systems, and get them the immediate support that they need for their present crisis. There will still be acute situations that present danger to the person in crisis or mental health provider when a law enforcement presence can assist in providing immediate safety for all involved.</p>	<p>3. The county should do more to partner with state crisis services and do extensive education and outreach to make more people aware of these services. The county should partner with nonprofit organizations to fund additional crisis services for boulder county residents that can fill gaps in the statewide crisis system. This includes expanding access to inpatient mental health and substance use disorder services by creating more inpatient capacity for these services.</p>
<p>4. What ways do you see the County promoting the new 988 hotline for suicide and mental health crisis?</p>	<p>4. The rollout of the new statewide 988 hotline is a fantastic opportunity for the County to leverage its relationships with partner organizations to raise awareness for this new service and equip outside providers to make referrals. Organizations like Mental Health Partners, RISE Against Suicide, TGTHR, EFAA, Sister Carmen, OUR Center, and Out Boulder County should be some of the organizations first engaged in the public awareness campaign.</p>	<p>4. The county should spearhead a significant education and outreach campaign to the community to raise awareness about this important resource. This includes outreach in multiple languages that are spoken in our community. When I was elected Mayor of Louisville, one of the first things we did was add communications professionals to the organization so that we could better communicate with the community. This resulted in a significant increase in public participation and awareness. We also set up and staffed hotlines for Fire victims in the wake of the marshall fire. We need to leverage this type of expertise at the County to be sure that we are communicating to the people in Boulder County and meet them where they are at. This means reaching the different demographics and geographical areas by communicating in a variety of ways and leveraging mental health experts in our community to make sure we're providing the outreach in an accessible way.</p>

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5. What actions would you take to address what's been called a "State of Emergency" for children's mental health, including the alarming increase in suicidal thinking among teens as young as ten?	5. This is another issue that truly requires a holistic approach, from ensuring that families and youth know how to access services and that we actually have services available to meet those needs, to increasing safe storage of weapons. We also must recognize that rates of mental health needs are higher for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth and they need culturally-appropriate mental health services.	5. Currently the county provides services through Mental Health Partners for prevention and intervention. We need to listen to the mental health experts and implement the solutions they have identified and take continuous feedback from the community to ensure we are on track (or off). As commissioner, one of the most critical roles is budget adoption. The budget represents the community's values and it is where hard tradeoffs are made. My experiencing budgeting in the City of Louisville, Denver Regional Council of Governments, the Mile High Flood District, and in the private sector as an engineer, give me a leg up at being able to both understand the relationship between program outcomes and the budget, and have given me the experience that is needed to understand how to increase revenues in cases where tradeoffs are unacceptable. Youth mental health is one of those areas where we have to stop trading off the services and bring in additional resources to address the needs.
6. Are you certified in Mental Health First Aid? If not, will you commit to doing so by the time you take the oath of office?	6. I am certified in mental health first aid and am ready to deploy those skills whenever needed. My facility dog, Buck, and I are called in to help victims of crime, disasters and first responders specifically to support their mental health needs in moments of crisis. Buck will accompany me to the Commissioners office to continue this work.	6. I am not currently certified. Yes.
Affordable Housing Questions		
1. What can the county do to help achieve the goals of the Regional Housing Partnership?	1. The goals set forth in the plan for the Regional Housing Partnership are aggressive, but feasible if we are able to better collaborate. We must convene the leaders more frequently to discuss progress towards goals, hold each other accountable across all partners, and jointly work on public education.	1. The county needs to take the lead in facilitating our regional housing plan and serve as the coordinator to spearhead, track, and complete projects and programs. We need to take action on our housing plan by working with the local jurisdictions. I am committed to a program of action around adding new affordable homes, purchasing and deed restricting existing housing, land banking, and public private partnerships. As a member of the county housing authority I would take very seriously the need to lead on all these areas.
a. Is this something on which you would commit to a leadership role?	a. Yes	

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2. What should the County be doing to help achieve the supportive service needs of affordable housing residents?	2. The most effective provision of services are provided on site, by peers, with low-barriers to access (ie: time, childcare and food provided). Each of our affordable housing programs must continue to leverage the wisdom of the people it serves by creating tenant advisory panels, hiring tenants directly, and uplifting their lived experience.	2. Boulder County has many programs in place to provide supportive services to community members in need including those in affordable housing. It is really important to think about the services that people need when we are locating new affordable housing so that people have access where they need it. When we built the Kestrel affordable housing, supportive services were a critical part of the effort. As a member of the county housing authority I would be very committed to these critical services.
a. Is this something on which you would commit to a leadership role?	a. Yes	
3. What do you understand about the history of racism that has led to people of color owning less property, and thus having less wealth than white people? a. What do you think the county can do now to enhance racial equity as it relates to housing?	3. Boulder County has not been immune from a history of redlining. The recently released documentary “This is [Not] Who We Are” details many examples within the City of Boulder, such as using eminent domain to turn black neighborhoods into parks serving white families. Without the ability to create generational wealth through property, many black and brown families are still suffering today because of it and have left the community. a. All of the ways we are looking at addressing the current affordability crisis must be reviewed with a racial equity lens, ensuring that people of color have access to programs at a higher rate. This also means that the County must continue to hire people into its housing staff from those communities who are able to provide peer support. The new racial equity office may also be leveraged to review policies and procedures.	3. Our country has a history of structural and institutional racism in housing policy, including redlining. Preventing access to loans and capital for people of color has resulted in inequality that exists to this day, including with regard to property ownership. We can strengthen our anti-discrimination housing policies, ensure we are enforcing our housing standards, and leverage the additional federal resources provided by the Biden administration to advance racial equity and support underserved communities.
4. Should the County find a way to fund ongoing legal services for renters throughout the County in partnership with municipalities? a. If so, what is a time frame for doing that, and how could it be funded?	4. Yes! a. The City of Boulder’s Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance Program and landlord/tenant mediation program are great models that could be expanded on and scaled by the County, leveraging internal resources, such as the Sheriff’s Office’s restorative justice/mediation program.	4. The county can facilitate community conversations around best practices in rental regulations (many of the communities do not have rental regulations, or even rental licensing) and work toward establishing a fair and consistent framework for renter protection. I support using county funds to provide low-income individuals with legal services for a variety of needs, not just renter related legal issues.
5. Recently after the fires, there has been evidence of price gouging by landlords taking advantage of a disaster. What do you think can be done to prevent these practices in the future?	5. With over 1,000 homes lost in a single day such as we saw with the Marshall Fire, significant action must be taken. I would be in favor of an immediate emergency rent stabilization declaration, limiting the amount that landlords can increase rent.	5. We have reported each case of price gouging that has come to our attention to the Attorney General’s office and they have been able to offer assistance. We need to make sure people are aware of the support from the AG so that if people are in need, they get the help that exists.
6. Would you support removing the state statute banning rent control?	6. Yes!	6. Yes

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IF YES, would you actively work within County Associations to remove this provision in statute?	Yes! It was incredibly disheartening to see a rent stabilization for mobile home residents pass through the state legislature this year, only to be vetoed by the Governor. We must enact rent stabilization programs, especially during a period like this, where we're seeing 3 - 4 digit increases in lease amounts for many renters.	Yes
7. The coordinated entry program in Boulder County was touted as a way to end homelessness. How effective do you believe it has been and what would you do to improve it?	7. We have seen many cases where CE has successfully helped individuals achieve stability in housing. At the same time, the initial theory that it would be the only solution to ending homelessness has since been debunked, with some people falling through the cracks. We must provide additional services and supports to those who fall outside of the CE system in a humane and human-centered way.	7. I think coordinated entry and housing first are good models, but we have left a lot of people behind by not providing the immediate services that people need. I support adding day sheltering capacity and additional health services. We need to listen to the cities, they are currently asking the county to do more to support the unhoused and have identified several of these gaps. We can start by addressing the known gaps and continue to improve.