

Candidate Responses: These are responses to questions we were not able to address at the forum

Do you support term limits?

Pickett: No

Gehreni: Yes

Matheson: No

Sellers: Yes

Tausche: Yes

Miller: Yes

What do you think the value is of having a Pre-K-8 school in town?

Pickett: I believe in supporting Pre-K–8 programs, as early education lays the foundation for every child’s future success.

Gehreni: Blowing Rock Elementary School has been a cornerstone of our Village since 1918. It is part of our identity. The school is highly-rated with a 13:1 student-teacher ratio. The location of the school provides a safe place for students and teachers, and the convenience of a central location in town versus an outlying county location.

Matheson: I believe our school and the relationships with the teachers and staff are an essential part of our community . Blowing rock School is an important part of the history of our community and it is a powerful tool for recruitment and attracting families for the healthy economic growth of Blowing rock.

Sellers: That is one thing that makes our town unique. I do not want to see us like other communities that have lost character

Tausche: The next school on the county's list for expansion is Parkway and the county currently has no plans to make any changes to our school.

Many people do move here because the Blowing Rock school is ranked very high in the state. I was president of the PTO when my daughter was there from 1st to 8th grade and loved the fact that we had the support of the town.

Miller: Very valuable, It adds to the small-town charm of our community and makes the lives of our children and their parents more enjoyable.

Public attacks from lobbying groups take a toll on the town manager and staff. What will you do as a council member to support them and protect staff morale and retention?

Pickett: Leadership in the public eye requires courage, empathy, and the understanding that not every decision will satisfy everyone. As a Council Member, I believe the strongest way to support our Town staff is by demonstrating consistent respect and appreciation, advocating for fair compensation, and ensuring that our benefits reflect both the challenges of today's economy and the specific needs of our community.

Gehreni: There is really no room for such attacks on our town manager and staff. These critical employees are a huge benefit to our residents and keep our Village running. Without good employees, our entire Village would suffer.

Matheson: An unreasonable attack and attempt to oppress or control town staff is an attack on the council members as well. Our staff is the best around and when a group or individual has general criticism to share, I believe we should evaluate ourselves as council members and receive "attacks" as they are directed to all of us as town staff.

Sellers: Be considerate and carrying of others. Respect the chain of command

Tausche: I don't believe this question is in the best interest of the unity of the town. I support Mayor Sellers' "One Blowing Rock" motto and will work towards fostering unity in our town. If we are going to tackle the many issues the town is facing we need everyone working together.

Miller: I will always support our town manager and staff. They do a wonderful job of delivering services to our community.

Do you support providing benefits to town employees to promote a great culture and incentivize employee attraction and retention?

Pickett: Yes

Gehreni: Yes

Matheson: Yes

Sellers: Yes

Tausche: Yes

Miller: Yes

What policies would you propose to balance short-term rentals with the need for long-term housing options?

Pickett: A healthy balance between short-term rentals and long-term housing depends on thoughtful town policies. By keeping short-term rentals within business districts, we can protect the sense of community and stability that defines our residential neighborhoods.

Gehreni: I will take this as two questions. I do feel that Blowing Rock has too many short term rentals. These need to be addressed and controlled. We need to consider mechanisms to contain the amount of short term rentals in the future. I will consider options as they are proposed. In regards to long-term housing, there is currently a Town Council subcommittee working on this issue. Workforce housing works with essential workers to provide a stable workforce for employers while providing stability and reduced commute times for these essential workers. I will consider incentives on a case-to-case basis as specific projects are brought to the Town Council which address workforce housing. The land use code is a large part of such consideration.

Matheson: as we follow the proposed state wide changes and trending in areas like ours, I believe that policy changes should develop in smaller stages or phases, if enforcement of existing ordinances or laws is not sufficient.

Sellers: Control by using zoning regulations

Tausche: This is a complex problem throughout the world right now. There is legislation pending at the state level that could affect our ability to control short term rentals at the municipal level. We need to investigate our options and watch this closely as legislation progresses.

I support a comprehensive program that addresses the needs of employees, residents and tourists.

Miller: I think the town council needs to listen to the citizens of Blowing Rock about their concerns regarding short term rentals and the need to restrict their growth. Nothing can destroy our small-town charm and sense of community more than uncontrolled short term rental growth. We need to examine our building codes and make the changes needed to restrict short term rentals while we still have the time.

Do you support Paid Parking?

Pickett: Yes

Gehreni: Yes

Matheson: Maybe

Sellers: Yes

Tausche: Yes

Miller: Yes

Would you be willing to support a moratorium on short term rentals?

Pickett: Maybe

Gehreni: Maybe

Matheson: No

Sellers: Maybe

Tausche: Yes

Miller: Yes