

Kim Bergel, Humboldt County Supervisor District 4 Candidate

1. What are your top three business related issues in the district you represent that you will prioritize and devote efforts to achieve?

Housing, Safety/Mental health, shopping local.

The County faces a lot of challenges with regard to business. For me the three biggest issues facing the business community are the need for housing for the anticipated influx of business, such as the fish farm, wind farm, Cal Poly, and the new broadband. We have potential for economic development which if planned carefully will not jeopardize the beauty and rural character which we all treasure. If we want to attract the needed professionals we will need to invest in infrastructure. We need to set high standards for our schools and provide the resources for schools to meet them. We must invest in libraries, museums, trails, and electric vehicle power stations. And we must expand and ensure the consistency of flights in and out of our airport. We also need to address our healthcare system, mental and otherwise. The mental health crisis accounts for over 60 percent of our social problems. But I will address that in your third question.

Second, we need to promote safety for businesses and their customers. This means resolving the mental health issues; addressing crime; addressing increasing traffic issues; and safe parking as well as public transit.

Another issue is the need to protect local small businesses. We should promote local preference in buying as money spent at a local business is likewise spent on other local businesses rather than sending money out of the area. As much as I support the promotion of the larger projects I've mentioned, the vast majority of employment in California is through small businesses. We need to prioritize resources for them as well, and promote accessibility.

2. What specific skills and background make you the most qualified candidate for this position to represent the business community?

I am accessible and available to address and mitigate problems and support. I will always return your phone call. I pride myself in my ability to bring consensus to resolve conflict. In my council career I have worked closely with many agencies regarding mental health and continue to vigilantly work on mental health and safety to lessen the impacts of these very real problems for our businesses. I have been in Humboldt County my whole life and have watched the ebbs and flows of local impacts as we have gone from a vibrant downtown to the coming of Bayshore Mall and the impacts to our business district. I have had the opportunity to work in retail locally both as a manager and a salesman and have experienced many of the experiences our retail outlets incur. My former husband and I owned a local construction business and certainly am very experienced in the ebb and flow of business. As a single mom I provide a perspective which is rare on government bodies anywhere, and that businesses can benefit from that perspective.

3. What are the most pressing current issues before the Board of Supervisors that require timely resolution?

Housing, mental health issues and rebuilding our region from the impacts of covid.

It is important to note that California has nearly 160,000 unhoused people in the state. Many of these folks are women with children and people over 65. Shelter is a need just as much as clean air, food, and clean water. Shelter provides a sense of security for folks. I am proud of the efforts and out of the box solutions the City of Eureka is working toward to mitigate this issue. Though mental health issues don't discriminate, our unhoused folks are more visible for sure. There is a need for all types of housing to get people the supports needed. That being said we must include wrap around services and support for folks who have been on the streets to insure their successes. The impacts of the pandemic have been devastating to many of us. We are in a very unique time in history. We have the opportunity to rebuild in a thoughtful and strategic way to create the region we want. There is much opportunity for dollars from the state to help our region recover. The city and county have filed for many of these grants to create not only support for individuals but for businesses as well. More tools in the tool box to address mental health is critical. The Laura's Law pilot program adopted by the County as well as Governor Newsom's Care Court will both be tools to address people with grave mental disorders who are not currently interested or more importantly able to seek solutions for themselves. We must continue to look for and implement new ideas in these ever changing times. I am looking forward to being a part of the solution as our County moves ahead to prosperity and balance.