

Mike Newman

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

1. Evident issues of homelessness, addiction, and mental illness especially those who camp near businesses
2. Work force development and retention.
3. Lack of childcare services

While we have developed strong approaches to end homelessness, we have done little to keep people from slipping through the cracks and becoming homeless in the first place. As a result, many argue that what we are doing must not be working since homelessness still exists. The problem is that we have not turned off the faucet. We must stop the flow of people into homelessness. This work will require collaboration at all levels of government between multiple systems: mental health, housing, health care, criminal justice, child welfare, education, domestic violence, immigration, labor, and others. We must work together across the federal government, with state and local officials, and with private philanthropy to create systems and funding streams that better identify people at risk of homelessness or mental health risk and intervene earlier to keep them from losing their homes.

We are on the right track for our community to develop our workforce with the recent change of our State University being designated Cal Poly and efforts of leadership to implement that type and style of curriculum. And this is in conjunction with the direction that our College has forged with our local high schools and the local Workforce Development Board. We need more skilled workers as we attract businesses to our communities.

I will work with Kerry Venegas of Changing Tides Family Services and other Childcare services to come up with ideas and an action plan to bring forward.

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

I've been in private enterprise. When I had my own Insurance office, I had to make payroll and face those decisions that many small businessowners face when they employ workers. The employees' wages are always paid out first and then other bills get paid. I've had to balance a budget for my business. I've had to manage workflow and hire talented people. In other words, I've been in the trenches and walked their walk.

I've served on the Measure Z committee, making sure that Eureka got its fair share so that they could operate the MIST program which would lessen the effect on businesses in Old Town. I have and am serving on the County's Planning Commission. I understand the difficulties of development and how burdensome extra regulations can be.

It is a misconception that government can "fix" business or the pressures they face. What the County government and specifically the Board of Supervisors can do to assist business is provide an environment in which business can thrive...businesses, especially Humboldt County businesses, will figure out how to survive. Government establishes regulation that affects business.... and government needs to apply the regulation in a consistent manner "across the board". The Board of Supervisors sets the tone for the application of these regulations, and they need to be sure they are sending a clear/consistent message to their staff on how to apply these regulations. A message that supports the business community.

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

The budget and the current crisis with the AC office of untimely reports to the State. I haven't been able to completely delve into these topics to give them the time that they need to render any insights or input. And I believe the Board of Supervisors is working on this issue with their full attention.

Another issue that I am aware of, and that touches our whole community, is the issue of access to our hospitals and health care. As a Board member of the Providence/St Joseph Community Benefit board, I have been privy to the difficulties of attracting and keeping healthcare providers. And providers are of all types across the board, from healthcare worker to nursing to physicians are needed.

One particular "crisis" that is and has been building is the mental health crisis with lack of facilities to triage and treat and because of that, our emergency rooms have been overused because of the requirement that they have to treat anyone that goes thru their doors. It is my understanding that there is a stakeholder group of decision-makers beginning to explore strategies to help us move forward and to engage the entire community in playing a role in addressing these critical needs. That is important because it will free up our ERs to treat the medical emergencies that occur and need to be treated in a timely manner for our citizens in need.

In particular, I want to draw attention to a several million-dollar State Grant and DHHS-Behavioral Health is working with Willow Glen, a non-profit administrator of licensed facilities throughout CA, to establish a facility locally for clients in need of short-term residential crisis services. This will help take away the extra burden put on our ERs.

Willow Glen recently came to Humboldt and toured 3 buildings in search of potential facilities to house the Adult Crisis Residential Treatment facility that we need to treat those with mental illness. But it's been difficult to find a facility that in the Eureka area, partly because of some misconceptions that the area around the facility will be overrun with those with mental illness because there will be no oversight at the facility. We really need to find a building that can be leased for this purpose and that doesn't need to be completely refurbished with ADA requirements.