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Respondent

6 Anonymous

41:14

Time to complete

1. Name & office you are seeking *

Connie Keogh for HD 92

2. The 2023 Legislature passed several bills to encourage housing development by revising land use laws (subdivision), reducing regulatory barriers, and streamlining processes.

SB 382 – Montana Land Use Planning Act.

SB 131 – Revise exempt subdivision review timelines.

HB 211 – Revise local subdivision review process.

What are your opinions of the legislation listed? What specific policy changes would you recommend/support to further encourage housing development in our community? *

I voted for both SB 382 and 131. I was a little uncertain about HB 211 as I had received some correspondence from constituents about their concerns around public participation. I do believe all three are essentially good, and in many cases all ready were current best practices in the County and City. I understand that there are possible tweaks that need done to these, and I look forward to hearing what those are as we get closer to the session.

3. Missoula is an employment anchor in western Montana, but a quarter of Missoula's workforce lives outside Missoula County. The 2019 Missoula County Housing Action Plan states, "Underlying high housing costs is an undersupply of around 2,400 housing units in Missoula County".

What specific policies would you pursue to address the community's workforce housing deficit and ongoing needs? *

Securing public private partnerships seems like an important goal. Lowering interest rates and finding ways to make workforce housing more desirable and economically feasible to build is necessary.

4. During past few years as home prices have soared, rental rates have seen a similar trend. Locally some people have voiced concerns that short-term rentals are reducing available rental units and increasing rental rates.

What is your opinion on short-term rental regulation? *

I understand the perception that short-term rentals impact housing supply, but am not entirely sure this is the case. I also understand that property owners should be able to rent under short term circumstances. Some property owners depend on this income to remain in their homes, pay their mortgages and live where they work. Short term rentals do need to be regulated, and we need to look at ways to adjust property taxes accordingly.

5. Montana policymakers must address the disconnect between growth in our communities and inadequate infrastructure.

What legislative changes would you support or propose to help communities invest in infrastructure to keep up with the demands of growing local economies and populations? *

SB 536 from last session provided funding for local governments with road maintenance. This type of legislation is crucial for the demands of growing local economies and populations. The state needs to help pay for infrastructure across the state, and I would support similar legislation in the future.

6. Property taxes are the primary funding source for local government services and infrastructure and help to fund public services, infrastructure, and education. Increasing mill levies and increasing property value assessments have left many property owners demanding relief.

What policies would you support to provide permanent property tax relief to Montana homeowners? *

One idea that I am hearing about recently is a variable residential tax rate that increases at different levels based on the home's value. Also, we should look at taxing second homes at an entirely higher rate. There are other versions of using homestead exemptions that are possibilities where the tax burden varies. The property tax situation is complex, and our current system is very antiquated. Taxes need to be more balanced and fair. I also would consider a special options sales tax if it gave relief directly to property owners.

7. State Law provides for tax increment financing (TIF) and urban renewal districts. TIF is used within urban renewal districts to combat blight and promote economic development. However, critics of TIF say that these urban renewal districts can be in place for many years, and TIF diverts property tax revenue away from schools and county governments.

What is your opinion of TIF? What changes to TIF statutes would you recommend, if any? *

SB 523 last session was aimed at significantly changing TIF statutes. I voted against it when they tried to blast it on the house floor after being tabled in house tax committee. I believe that TIF has been very crucial to development in Missoula, and am opposed to any major changes.

8. One in five homes in Montana is serviced by an onsite septic system. If properly installed and maintained, septic systems are a safe and cost-effective means of waste disposal for homeowners and businesses. Some regulations on septic systems are enforced by local health departments, and enforcement is inconsistent. For instance, how bedrooms are counted to determine what size of system is necessary and how nonconforming systems are handled varies.

Will you support legislation that brings greater consistency to the enforcement of regulations on existing septic systems? *

Yes, I believe that the key to enforcement of regulations is education and helping owners understand the personal benefit to themselves if they maintain and upgrade their system. Inspection programs that help homeowners understand the issues are important, and creating incentives to enforce some of the upgrades that would be beneficial would be smart.

9. Housing development outside of areas with access to municipal water systems frequently rely on exempt appropriations statutes for water supply.

What are your thoughts on current statutes? What, if any, changes would you support? *

I'm very fearful of the tug-a-war between development and agriculture. It is very difficult to find a solution that works in "practice". HB 642 that didn't pass wasn't necessary. There are more appropriate processes for determining the best approach to water uses that are exempt from the permitting process. I'm not sure what changes I would support, but am willing to learn and understand more about this.

10. **Do you support Montana's existing code regarding exemptions on discrimination in housing (49-2-305)? ***

Yes.

11. REALTORS® believe that private property rights are fundamental to our free-market system and are a cornerstone upon which this nation was founded. Our United States and Montana Constitutions recognize and protect the right to own property. A strong economy depends upon preserving the right to freely own, use, and transfer real property.

If elected, what approach will you take to balancing private property rights with public interests? *

I do believe in the importance of private property rights, and it is important that public interest be considered also. I'm curious if this is a question about "infill" or eminent domain or what? I look forward to understanding your thoughts on this more and didn't find a reference to this on your website.

12. Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number *

Barbara Berens P.O. Box 7542 Missoula, MT 59807. 406-273-1243

13. Will you accept PAC contributions? *

Yes

No

Thank you!

We appreciate you taking the time to complete our survey so that we might better understand your position on key issues facing our community. The committee will be evaluating surveys received and responding within a few weeks regarding next steps.