

From: Mayre Flowers
Candidates for Flathead County Sheriff Respond Here is what they said.

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A Huge Thank You to the Four Candidates for Flathead County Sheriff who responded to the nine questions I recently posed to them. Below please find the background information and questions I asked now followed by each candidate's verbatim response. Their responses appear after each question captured in the original email each candidate was sent.

Please scroll down to the question section and read and compare their answers. Then Make Time to Vote in the June 5th Primary Election. Click here for details on where and when to vote. Your Vote Matters! Feel free to share this email with friends and encourage them to vote.

Dear Candidates for Flathead County Sheriff,

First let me say a sincere thank you to each of you for your service to our community. Your jobs, without exception, are valued and critical to the safety of our community and made even more challenging by the tight budget limits that you are asked to operate within.

Like many county residents, I knew little about the operation of your department and the policies that shape your work until recently. As a grandmother of victims of child sexual assault, I have had to learn more about the justice system and the county sheriff's office to understand how our county and justice system handle cases of child sexual assault.

I have visited each of your websites and viewed tapes of candidate forums you have participated in, but I still have unanswered questions. To better inform myself and hundreds of others in the Flathead who want to be able to count on effective and responsive leadership in the sheriff's department, I ask that you provide brief responses to the following questions. In sharing your responses, I will include both the background statement and questions I have provided, and your response in full and verbatim. Should you choose not to respond, I would share this also. I ask these questions as a concerned voter and not as part of any group, party, or PAC. Your responses will be shared with friends and community members, over 200 of whom I have already sent these questions to and who are anticipating your responses before they vote. Please feel free to give me a call if you have any questions [deleted]. Please email your responses to me as soon as possible at [deleted].

Thank you!

Mayre Flowers

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Questions

Background: At its core, prison sentences are meant to both punish the person who committed a crime and protect the public from the criminal. But lengthy prison terms have become costly budget items and these costs appear to be driving significant policy changes in how crimes are handled in our county and state. In recent years Montana lawmakers have worked with Department of Corrections officials, the Judicial Branch, and the law enforcement community to change legislation aimed at reducing the number of inmates in Montana prisons. As an alternative to very expensive, growing incarceration rates, lawmakers have instead implemented budget changes intended to provide, at a lower cost, more funding for evidence-based community supervision programs, and mental health and addiction treatment services in local communities. Recent state budget cuts, however, have forced reduction in funding for many of these critical services, resulting in convicts being sentenced to supervision programs and/or other community-based services which lack adequate funding to implement. Trials, too, are costly for the county, and budget restraints mean limited staffing and unacceptably heavy caseloads for county attorneys.

1. How do you view state and national policy trends to reduce prison terms, which are intended to reduce the heavy costs of prisons and lower the rates of recidivism (re-arrests) by providing treatment through community-based programs and evidenced-based practices?

Jordan White: I agree with the trend toward reduced sentences and increased treatment - particularly in crimes of self-destructive behavior or crimes against property. I feel the most important way for a person to make different choices with their lives is to change the way they see themselves. When people are willing to see themselves differently, they can see everyone else and the world around them differently. I have been heavily involved in personal development, coaching, and mentoring for the past eleven years. I want to have the greatest impact possible with my life and strive to pass that passion along to others. Second chances can be just what some people need to make the most out of their lives.

Keith Stahlberg: I am not for reducing prison sentences for most crimes. I am a firm believer that if you don't want to do the time, then don't do the crime. I do believe we need to do a better job of reintegrating individuals into society when the time comes for them to get out. Ultimately we want people to change their ways and become productive members of society.

We used to know right from wrong, my how times have changed! Personal accountability is a thing of the past. We can now be the perpetrator of a crime and be painted as the victim. The sad part is there are jury's out there that fall for that foolishness. So I believe in accountability for those found guilty of a crime but I also know that for most crimes we also need to prepare those individuals for life outside of the prison walls.

Brian Heino: The recent legislation has affected local law enforcement in many ways. While it has reduced the amount in prison to free up the Department of Corrections inmates it has

increased the amount we hold on probation and parole violations in our community. So releasing early has only turned the problem to local law enforcement and the probation and parole. It also limited our abilities to arrest on many of the minor offense like misdemeanor theft (under \$1500, and disorderly conduct (fights in bars, ect) This has limited law enforcement's ability to often get individuals into they system for treatment. This comes back to the broken windows policy that many agencies are using to reduce criminal activity and get citizens on the right track. So I do not agree with the past legislations since I think it limited law enforcement and put many criminals on the street where they return to drug use and criminal activity.

That being said, as the current Patrol Commander I have to follow the legislation and Montana Code Annotated I took an oath to enforce. I also believe with proper sentencing on minor offense and drug addiction it reduces recidivism by offering individuals the ability to avoid jail time and become productive members of society. Of course certain crimes I believe we hold a responsibility to protect the public and must be incarcerated for the public's safety.

Since I believe your question is based on sexual violent offenders, I don,'t believe in plea bargains for evidence that is beyond a reasonable doubt.

Calvin Beringer: I believe that we need to review and update the present way we are incarcerating those convicted of a crime. I don,'t believe we can arrest our way out of present situation. Working with the community and others to reduce incarceration time is the best practices as long as we consider the safety of our community.

2. What kind of changes in the operations of the county sheriff's office might these policy changes require you to make and plan for?

Jordan White: Relationships, trust, and communication!! We cannot have the impact the community needs and deserves without ALL components of the criminal justice system, mental health, community organizations, and medical professionals working together and communicating. If we each carry our part of the burden efficiently and professionally while expecting to support each other, the community will certainly win!

Keith Stahlberg: I see less and less accountability in the Justice System. Because of this, many of the individuals that I arrest on a daily basis are on some kind of probation. Some of these individuals have been warned in the past numerous times to stop their behavior but because our Probation and Parole Officers have been neutered by the legislature there is no bite to the bark anymore. One of the changes that I see is trying to keep morale up at the office because we as law enforcement have been hamstrung by the legislature. The bad guy knows we are limited in what we can do to them and they are more than happy to rub our noses in it. Couple that with our local issue of lack of jail space and we now have a recipe for disaster.

Brian Heino: Overall we are always being asked to do more with less. The professional men and women and the sheriff's office constantly strive to provide the best cases. We currently have done training in better evidence collection in sexual assault cases and currently staff two forensic

Child interviewers to avoid the argument of the defense. We currently work with the hospital and have investigators, victims advocates, and child interviewers meet regularly to better our programs. The future we will expand these resources and continue to train investigators in the best practices. I will also communicate with the new county attorney to better the communications between departments and request an investigator be assigned to the county attorney to follow-up on any information to better the cases. Over the past year I have seen an increase in child cases which has overloaded the investigations of the sheriff's office. We will have to expand the amount of detectives who are trained in cases involving children. We will also continue to work with the internet crimes units to continue to prosecute those sharing child porn in our community. As law enforcement we are frustrated with these cases which sometimes do not include communications with the victims and the prosecution of those we build month long cases on. I'm hoping with a refreshed county attorney's office we will be able to better communicate. On a separate note I believe in School Resource Officers, this provides a direct link for children to report, parents to communicate and the one on one support for our schools and children.

Calvin Beringer: These types of crimes are very difficult to balance the community and convicted. With that in mind, we must adhere or develop best practices to protect victims and their families. I will work the justice system to maintain or upgrade if necessary and hold others accountable. I agree, the Sheriff is the primary protector of the community and must work diligently to maintain the trust of the community.

Background: According to a recent news report by Montana Public Radio from an interview with officials at the Montana Department of Corrections: „Between 2012 and 2016, 45 percent of people convicted of sexual assault in Montana were sentenced directly to prison. Another 35 percent served no time in confinement under deferred or suspended sentences. The remaining 20 percent were committed to the Department of Corrections (DOC).“

However, of the 20 percent of people convicted of sexual assault who are committed to the Department of Corrections, many, if not most, are placed in a DOC intensive supervision program. What this means is the person convicted of sexual assault, while being referred to as an „inmate, by the DOC, can live at home, work, and for the most part move about the community freely. Intensive supervision usually lasts six months (regardless of sentence duration), and each month the required daily or regular check-ins with a program officer and electronic monitoring are reduced or eliminated.

Additionally, as a result of plea bargains, few of these sexual assault cases ever go to trial. Of the few that do, many of the victims and their families find themselves at the mercy of defense attorneys who force even very young victims to relive their horrendous, painful experience in a public forum. Montana does not have in place rules, as do other states, that protect children from these tactics which are used to force most victims to agree to plea deals rather than be subjected to such a hostile court process. Yet another significant drawback to the use of plea bargains is that the victims and their families are provided little to no say in the plea bargain process or terms.

From my perspective as one who has gone through this system as a grandmother of young victims, victims are caught in a system that has limited resources to defend them and weak plea bargains that fail to provide a clear deterrent to on-going sexual assault in our community. While the plea bargain and court process are outside of the direct responsibility of the sheriff, I believe that the sheriff's office can play an invaluable leadership role in helping to raise awareness, and work in partnership with other agencies and the legislature to bring about changes that will better address crimes of sexual assault in our community.

3. Recognizing that the sheriff's office has a role somewhat independent of the role of the county attorney's office, how would you rate the efforts of the county sheriff's office in responding to or handling of cases of sexual assault and particularly child sexual assault? Please address issues such as leadership opportunities, response times, investigation and evidence gathering, department policies that frame when cases are given priority, or considered not viable, and victim services. Where do you feel the department is doing a good job, and where do you see the need for improvement? Where do you hope to provide fresh leadership?

Jordan White: First, I am sorry you have experience with this topic. Sexually related offenses are truly heinous and have life-long consequences for the victims and their families. I have been certified as a child victim/witness interviewer. I have been a school resource officer and built relationships with children which led to them confiding in me. I know from this experience that specialized training is essential to the investigation of these crimes and supporting the victims. I am proud of the child advocacy center that caters specifically to these crimes and to the victims. I would like to see training expand outside the center and it specialists so our deputies can gain a deeper appreciation for the amount of work that goes into these cases and can begin building a case that would support the victim and prosecution from the very beginning. No matter how efficient we become, I know we must always strive to be better at how we respond.

Leadership: I see sexually related offenses as the ultimate test of compassion, professionalism, and leadership. How the victim, their family, and anyone else involved is supported in this process will determine their level of trust and confidence in the system. Shame, blame, and guilt are roadblocks that can destroy our vision for the future and our dreams. This must not be allowed to occur if we can help it.

Response times: Cases involving crimes against people are of the highest priority to me. Sexually related offenses must have particular importance. We will always have to balance manpower and the needs of the community. Almost every other state has more officers per capita, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't raise the bar with our compassion and professionalism.

Investigation and evidence gathering: These cases require a detective with specialized training. Deputies need to know when it is appropriate and required to involve a detective early and set that detective up for success. This involved training dispatchers, patrol deputies, and supporting the detective division with resources (like call pay) to be available all hours of the night and day

to respond to these cases. Our evidence technician and detectives can support our patrol division with training and guidelines to help them make the initial decisions and take action. In the end, however, it is up to the sheriff to set the bar and support his deputies to ensure that the public gets the best service possible.

Office Policies and time Frames: Policy is typically driven by inferior behavior. We hope for the best and write policy when someone makes a mistake to keep it from happening again. Responding to sexually motivated offenses is one area I feel we should be using policy to set performance standards BEFORE someone drops the ball. Involving investigators, prosecutors, and counselors in the initial response strategy can give us and the victims the best chance of getting it right the first time.

Performance and improvement: I feel we are performing best in the child advocacy center and Internet Crimes Against Children when it comes to protecting our community from sexual predators. The confidence I have in these areas comes from the amazing passion and integrity of the people working tirelessly to stay at the front of the trends. I feel the worst area has to do with human and sex trafficking as it related to drug related offenses. This is a complex issue that is riddled with shame, blame, and guilt. Many young women are forced into a horrendous lifestyle due to addiction where they are raped and trade their bodies for sex and drugs. There are countless reasons why they don't want to ask for help and one giant reason they should - THEMSELVES. I want law enforcement to advocate for these victims and offer them a glimpse of hope and a pathway to people waiting to love and support them.

Fresh Leadership: I am willing to believe in the impossible for our community and each person in it. People often look at issues like sexual assaults and don't know where to start due to the sheer complexity of the issues surrounding them. I have repeatedly placed myself in the position to make that choice throughout my life and career and proven to myself and others that I will take action! I have done this through years of mentorship and am now supporting others to do the same thing. That is what I want for our sheriff's office. I am striving for a partnership of connection within the community rather than the 'us versus them' perception and the resulting frustration. My career has been highlighted by approachability and a willingness to learn and be curious. I believe there are three types of information in the world - what we know, what we don't know, and what we don't know that we don't know. I want to learn from our stakeholders so we can make better choices and be more resourceful. I have a true open door policy to all members of the community and want to hear their (your) voice.

Keith Stahlberg: We have made great strides over the years trying to expand our services to the community, however, we have a very long way to go. We can always get better at what we do. If we ever think we have 'arrived, then it is time to hang up the closed sign and shutter the doors. Sexual assault cases are very difficult to investigate. Difficult for the officer and even more so for the victim. Unfortunately we do not have enough resources to adequately investigate these crimes in a timely manner. Most parents expect an investigation to get underway immediately. Sometimes that does happen but in other cases it might be a week or more before an interview is scheduled with the victim. We are behind the curve when it comes to trained officers that can

investigate these crimes which equates to longer wait times. KRMC has done a great job and has helped LEO's in the valley by getting a few trained nurses that can help us collect valuable evidence.

Over the last 17 years I have had to take numerous calls of sexual assault involving adults and children. I can tell you all of the cases affected me in one way or the other. It is very difficult when you have kids the same age as those that have been assaulted. When it comes to the kids we as patrol officers are limited in our investigation as to what we can ask/do because of the child's age. We do this because we do not want to give the defense counsel any wiggle room to try and get their client off on the charges. As far as priority goes, all of the sexual assaults are a priority. Some cases do have more or ,Äúbetter, evidence which helps in court. In the end I have learned the hard way that it is not what is right or wrong..it is what you can prove in court. In light of this, the sooner we are made aware of the possibility of the crime, the sooner we can start an investigation.

I would like to have more resources to put toward sex crimes in the valley. I am also keenly aware we do not have a money tree growing in our parking lot so we can pay for more trained deputies etc. that we will need to combat this crime. I wish I could say I will magically make it all better but I can,'t. What I can say is every time someone new is elected there is an excitement that goes along with that. I will try and capitalize on that excitement and bring that to our office to help with these crimes as well as others.

Brian Heino: As stated above the Flathead County Sheriff's Office is one of the leading agencies in the state. With grant funded forensic Child Interviewers, child advocates, and trained investigators in sexual assault cases. Of course we are always striving to do more. I would better coordination with local resources, other law enforcement to provide the best services we can can.

Leadership opportunities are always available. I will only pick by the most qualified rather than who is supporting me in this election. It is one reason I have not discussed command staff. We currently have deputies serving on domestic violence boards, child safety, Crisis Intervention Teams, Field Training, and other community boards. I presume the question is response times in general. We have 41 deputies on the street, 5200 square miles of jurisdiction (larger than the state of Rhode Island), 100,000 residences, and had 42,000 calls last year. Thats over 100 calls per day if they were to be equally distributed throughout the year, so prioritizing calls is a must. Calls involving life safety are first (disturbances, assaults, weapons calls, etc.) From there they are handled in the order they are received or based on if the incident is in progress.

Sexual assault cases in progress are a high priority call along with those mentioned above. Reports of victims at hospital are only secondary to an in progress call, those being reported afterwards are taken as soon as an available deputy can respond. Detectives place high priority on sexual assault calls and coordination with forensic interviewer is done. Cases are sent to the county attorney for prosecution. Cases involving children under the age of 10 where both victim and suspect are under age 9 are not prosecuted and are handled by counselors and victims

services. Also if the victim is not a cooperating victim the case is usually dismissed. Beyond that dismissals and plea agreements are handled by the prosecuting attorneys.

Flathead County has Forensic interviewers, victims advocates, and advanced training for a portion of the detectives. We need to advance the training for all detectives, increase communications with local victims services and ensure we continue to be on the leading edge of investigations.

Calvin Beringer: I have been out of the office for a few years now and would not rate the office and their work. I will however outline that my leadership and commitment to our community is as good as or better than others. My intentions are to complete a needs assessment of the operations and develop a plan to address any concerns identified by my command team and community representatives. We all need to work together for our community's needs and a good plan for the future. I bring over 32 years of law enforcement and management experience from the military and two Sheriff's agencies. I have either lead or worked with a team to evaluate and develop organizational plans for many teams and organizations. The Sheriff's office I believe needs a new way of doing business. We need to bring a business plan to the organization, developed with members of our community and others for the future.

4. Given difficult choices the sheriff's office must make due to staffing and budget restraints, how would you rank the following sex-related crimes in terms of priority if you are elected sheriff including: sex trafficking, incest and child sexual assault, internet crimes of pornography and sex solicitation, rape, and domestic violence?

Jordan White: I cannot rank these in an order of priority. They are all crimes against people which places them all at the top of the list. It is like rescuing people - we help the ones who cannot help themselves first and then we keep going as long and hard as we can to rescue each and every person we can. The key to being the most effective is in the area of anticipation. We can no longer afford to be reactionary to these issues. We know our community has changed and our acceptance of bad things happening must change with it. Education and leadership in our schools and within the community should be helping parents, children, and community members look for signs that these crimes are happening or about to happen and intervene. We know sex trafficking is often related to drug trafficking and abuse. Incest and child sexual assault tend to include grooming and manipulation. Internet crimes and solicitation can be monitored and tracked, but someone needs to be looking. Rape victims usually know their assailant and deny warning signs because they don't want to think the worst, offend someone, or hurt someone's feelings. It is OK to offend someone, but education and support is essential when someone feels they are in danger and want to take action. Lastly, domestic violence is the domestic terrorism every community struggles to contain. It is in our churches, government, and businesses. It is the climax of fear and vulnerability and shreds the fabric of our homes and relationships (spouses and children). These cases need to be investigated and prosecuted thoroughly to establish boundaries to our families and community. Organizations outside law enforcement and victim advocates are essential to the the successful processing and growth from these crimes. Supporting them should be of utmost priority for law enforcement leaders. I have

already cultivated mutually beneficial relationships with members and leaders of local organizations including the Abbie Shelter, the Sparrows Nest, the Lighthouse Lounge, Project 406, Glory from Ashes, and others who are lovingly serving the hurting people of our community. I desire to bring all these organizations and passionate hearts together with open communication and support in a way that best serves those in need. There are so many people willing to help with their own special experience, compassion, and vision and just need the guidance, leadership, and opportunity.

Keith Stahlberg: Honestly, all of these crimes are our number 1 priority. There is no way to say one crime is more important than the other. They are all destructive to families and society and they all need our full attention. In reality this depends on how and when the call comes in. Is it third or fourth hand information? Is this the 10th sexual assault case today or is it the 1st one this month? Many times we might not have any other crimes such as these that we are currently investigating which gives us the opportunity to dive right in. Other times we have numerous calls of the same nature which then stretches our resources out a bit.

Brian Heino: I currently am working with one detective who has just returned from advanced training in sex trafficking. With the recent tools I'm working towards advancement of this position to ensure human trafficking is a priority. This is directly related to drugs in many cases so this program will be an expansion of the drug task force unit. Internet crimes through our current ICAC division must expand to deal with the increase in the volume of those sharing child pornography. As previously discussed I will increase those trained in advanced training for child sexual assaults and sexual assaults, and will continue to update our patrol division with the required training to better our response. I currently have assigned one deputy as a representative on a domestic violence board. We are working towards grant funding of a domestic violence investigator and I am in the process of implementing investigatory forms to better pass information onto the victims advocate and prosecution.

Calvin Beringer: Those outlined crimes are to be investigated as a priority along other major crimes. I believe we need to investigate but also work on programs that will break the cycle of criminal activity.

5. If elected sheriff, how will your office work with the justice system in Flathead County to send a clearer message to those in our community who prey on young children that child sexual assault will not be tolerated?

Jordan White: People always vote "no" when they are confused. For this reason, my first priority will be the coordination and cooperation between all components of the criminal justice system including investigators, prosecutors, advocates, mental health professionals, defense attorneys, and judges. By agreeing on achievable outcomes that are mutually beneficial to our citizens, we can each do our job with accountability and transparency. The system must be allowed to work and be tested to ensure we are all meeting or exceeding expectations and there should be enough overlap to catch gaps in the system. As, I have said, I am also open to hearing the people's hearts and ideas on these matters.

Keith Stahlberg: First if we can I would like to do more „Äústings, in the valley to help expose these individuals. Secondly, I will work with the County Attorney’s Office to make it clear we want more cases prosecuted. I am tired of the catch and release program we have in place right now and I am personally frustrated with the plea bargains that take place without any input from the officers involved. I would rather try and take a case to court and lose than to not take a case to court and get a ho-hum, plea bargain. That being said there are those cases where you just don,’t have a choice but to take a plea bargain. However, in my mind those cases should be in the minority.

Brian Heino: Expansion of ICAC (internet crimes against Children), investigator of sex trafficking, and a direction of the providing the best investigations for sexual assaults to provide to county attorney. With communication with the county attorney we can send a clear message.

Calvin Beringer: I will work with my team to plan released statements, presentations, training and coordinated efforts with other identified justice representatives to publically outline our intentions to work with our community for the long term planning for safety and security.

6. What is your opinion on the use of plea bargains in sexual assault cases?

Jordan White: Plea agreements in any violent crime against another person must have input from the victim to be effective. Denying justice to the victim in these cases can haunt them forever and fracture their trust in the system meant to protect them. This is actually part of the healing process and might help them forgive and/or move forward with their lives if they are simply included in the process. I have found victims are far more compassionate than expected when they are included in a plea agreement and often more hurt and violated than expected when they are excluded. Any steps that might help a victim of sexual assault cases find peace and acceptance can forever impact their future and beliefs about sex, trust, and other human beings.

Keith Stahlberg: There are many factors that go into every case. I am not a big fan of plea bargains in any case whether it is sexually related or not. I think we can get „Äúlazy, when we just decide to plea out every case that comes across our desk. Having said that there is a huge gamble that goes along with taking many cases to trial. I have seen firsthand going into court with a „Äúslam dunk, only to leave with my tail between my legs. Juries are very fickle and you never know what the outcome might be.

Brian Heino: As a father of three I don,’t agree with plea agreements on child cases. I have seen cases where the plea agreement has allowed the victim not have to take the stand at their request or when evidence was lacking. I think clear communication with the victim in prosecution must occur.

Calvin Beringer: Plea bargains are a fact of the system but must take into consideration the safety of our community, victims and their families. We must also confirm our present system is good or upgrade, so that we provide a quality checks and balance plan to meet our needs.

7. In my experience with the justice system in Flathead County, I encountered the assertion that that sex offenders and pedophiles belong in therapy and not in jail from a number of individuals working both in the sheriff's office and from those working on the defense and prosecution side of the court and attorney system. What is your position on the assertion that that sex offenders and pedophiles belong in therapy and not in jail?

Jordan White: People who prey on the innocence of another (especially a child) are placed second to all others in my opinion. Therefore, I feel they should be incarcerated first and treated second. We cannot keep them locked up forever in most cases, but the message should be abundantly clear that they are criminals and aggressive steps will be taken to protect people from them. Our citizens should not live in fear because we won't lock up people who have proven they will prey on our most vulnerable members of society.

Keith Stahlberg: I would have to look at each case and then give you an answer based solely on that case. I could, "What if, it all day long so I can't honestly give you a pat blanket answer when it comes to sexual assault. I am not a doctor so I can't say treatment won't help. However, that treatment needs to be when they are behind bars. In the case of pedophiles, they need to be locked up so they can't harm other children, period end of story. I think some in our society believe we can fix everything given enough time/treatment. I am a born again Christian and am not naive enough to believe evil doesn't exist in this world. I know it does and we as a society need to be able to either lock that person away or in some cases remove that person from society through Capital Punishment.

Brian Heino: As a general answer I believe pedophiles belong in jail. Depending on the circumstances of the sexual assault case if the suspect is a predator and or in danger of reoffending they need to serve their time.

Calvin Beringer: I believe people need extra chances but those need to be balanced with the needs of the community. Also, keep in mind, I enforce the present laws. We will investigate and present the facts to the justice system. If asked, I will provide research and facts from our community and others so the justice system can make an educated decision.

Background: Drug courts are court-supervised programs that use treatment and accountability to address people's substance use problems as an alternative to incarceration and prison time. Drug courts are seen by a growing number of policy makers as a cost-saving alternative to prison time as well as a way to reduce some of the heavy caseloads that district courts in the state face. Numerous national studies are reporting, that when effectively run, such programs are reducing rates of recidivism (re-arrests). As candidates for county sheriff, a number of you have expressed an interest in seeing Flathead County establish a drug court.

Montana currently prohibits people convicted of a sex crime or violent offense from participating in a drug treatment court. A report to the 2016 legislature, however, entitled Justice

Reinvestment in Montana: Report to the Montana Commission on Sentencing, recommends also allowing drug courts to include in this process certain sex offenders when their conduct is also directly related to a substance use disorder.

8. Do you support the establishment of a drug court in Flathead County? Why or why not?

Jordan White: I am in complete agreement with adding the resources of a drug court to our sentencing and treatment options. People will struggle with drug addiction as long as they view themselves as a current or former drug addict. Locking someone up does not help them see themselves differently and make a different choice when they are exposed to the same people or circumstances that got them in trouble in the first place. Alternative treatment options can help them learn more about themselves and human behavior. This knowledge can help them understand their basic human needs and make different choices when they thoroughly understand the costs of benefits of all their choices.

Keith Stahlberg: I do support the idea of drug court. I think we are being overrun by the drug tsunami that is hitting our valley and we need as many tools as we can get to help counteract that tsunami. I also believe we need an expanded jail space so we can hold those individuals accountable that don't want to follow through with that second chance. Is drug court going to be a magic bullet? No, but it might help. I also want to get into the schools with my "Adopt a School Resource Officer" program so we can teach the kids about the dangers of illegal drugs to help stop the next generation of drug addicts before they even start. It's easier and cheaper to stop the epidemic before it ever starts.

Brian Heino: I believe the courts need expanded treatment options within our community. Drug courts are funded for three years so the question I would have is will they continue to be funded or will increased options solve the issues. I think the concept is good, in dealing with drug addicts as a previous agent with the northwest drug task force, extending the time they report to court is needed. We must change this concept instead of charging and then releasing each time instead of dealing with the issues.

Calvin Beringer: Yes, drug court is another way of minimizing the impact on the courts and ultimately the community. If we can address the needs of the community and the person who committed a criminal act, and develop a plan for their positive return to the community, their family and others to hold them accountable. That is one way to reduce costs and improve the community as a whole.

9. Do you feel if Flathead County established a drug court that a drug court is a proper tool to use with sexual assault crimes?

Jordan White: Theft can be a byproduct of a drug addiction. Prostitution can be a byproduct of a drug addiction. These have to do with the behavior that supports the feeding of the addiction. Assault, disorderly conduct, and trespass can even be crimes associated with the behaviors of an

addict. I cannot imagine any circumstances where crimes involving sexual assault should be treated under the auspices of a drug court. I can see a defendant's drug addiction may be helped with alternative treatment options rather than just incarceration, but I do not feel that the sexual assault should be lumped into a drug treatment penalty or minimized in any way due to a drug addiction. There is no excuse to cover up such a harmful act against another human.

Keith Stahlberg: Again, this would be on a case by case basis. On face value maybe. But depending on the severity of the crime, I don't think drug court is the route to go. I think in those instances they just need to be incarcerated. Now if you want to get them help while they are locked up that would be ok but it wouldn't be through drug court.

I believe we as a society need to take a long hard look at what we are doing with those individuals that are preying on our most vulnerable. I am just as frustrated as most red blooded Montanan's who see what is happening in our society. It is time we start holding people accountable for their actions. Unfortunately we have many among us who don't feel we need to expand our county jail, let alone lock someone up for the rest of their lives at MSP. In the last 17 years of being an officer here in the valley, I am keenly aware we have a Criminal Justice System, not a Victim Justice System. I hope this helps but if there are any further questions or if you need clarification please feel free to call me at 249-5598.

Brian Heino: No

Calvin Beringer: I believe that is another way to look at each offender and their future. But. We need to obtain facts and develop a community involved plan for everyone's future. Any program we review and possibly begin, has to be properly vetted and confirmed it will enhance our community and reintroduce those who have an opportunity to become a positive impact on the community and their families.