



VOTER REPORT

Candidates Respond to Important Questions Impacting Local Businesses

March 19, 2024: Primary Election
Hancock County Sheriff

The Findlay•Hancock County Chamber of Commerce Advisory Board invited the candidates running for local offices to respond to a questionnaire in order for you, the business community, to vote pro-business. Learn why the candidates chose to run and their top priorities should they be elected. These candidates were asked to respond, up to 175 words, to each question below. Those responses are listed exactly as they were received, and those that exceeded the required word count are stopped at 175 words.

Q. What were the primary motivations and driving factors that led you to decide to run for public office?



Mike A. Cortez: I believe in service to others on any level of our lives. After serving nearly 30 years to the residents of Hancock County, my desire to serve and make a difference in our community still drives me to do more. This passion to serve and lead our community comes from a deep motivation to enhance the men and women of the Hancock County Sheriff's Office and bring an elevated level of service and value to the residents of our community that can provide a safe community.



Daniel R. Harmon: I have served this community in Law Enforcement for 31 years. I am motivated to use my experience and leadership skills to make the Sheriff's Office the best it can be. I have a passion for my community and being a public servant is a very large part of who I am. I have been committed to this community above and beyond. I believe in community service, and I have been active with the Special Olympics, Wreaths Across America and Veterans organizations over the entirety of my career. I am a genuine person and don't believe in being a part of volunteer opportunities at the time of elections only. I am highly motivated to change the culture of volunteerism in our community by being involved in the community.



Mark A. Price: Hancock County is my home. It's where my family lives, and it's where I've chosen to dedicate my entire life to serving others through my work in law enforcement and volunteering with the Vanlue Fire Department. I've worked for over 25 years at the Hancock County Sheriff's Office, having the opportunity to advance through the ranks to Enforcement Captain. Throughout my career, I've managed nearly every aspect of the Sheriff's Office, including corrections, communications, enforcement, and administration. With my leadership experience and understanding of the office, I'm ready to take on the challenge of being the chief law enforcement officer in Hancock County. I have firsthand knowledge of the operations and administrative responsibilities of the Office of the Sheriff, which include budgeting and expenditures. I look forward to leading and supporting the everyday efforts of the fine men and women who serve our community and place others' safety ahead of their own every day.

Q. What are your priorities or concerns for your community?



Mike A. Cortez: Being an active member of the Sheriff's Office gave me firsthand insight into the challenges facing Hancock County. Based on my experience over nearly 30 years in Hancock County, I have identified three areas where I would enhance the service and value the Sheriff's Office brings to the community. First, The enhancement of community engagement through the reformation of the K9, School Resource Officer and Community Mental Health programs. Second, as we move into a new generation of policing, it is paramount we change with modern technological advancements. I would like to outfit our officers with Body Worn Cameras, introduce Evidence Based Policing and enhance our ability to address modern digital cybercrimes. Third, to further our professional practices, I will provide opportunities for professional development, create programs that acknowledge, recognize, and promote the positive image of our profession to the public and to the employees. This can subsequently result in a higher level of service and value to the community.



Daniel R. Harmon: My priorities are the health and safety of this community. My concerns are the staffing issues at the Sheriff's Office and how the staff are treated. I cannot be an effective Sheriff if I cannot hire and retain quality staff. I must treat the employees with dignity and respect. I will increase effective communication with the staff, and I will promote a team approach to our mission. I will allow the staff to have a vested interest in how we operate. It is my belief that a change in the culture of the Sheriff's Office needs to occur with a positive outlook for the staff and community. Training is one of my top priorities to ensure the staff is confident and knowledgeable. I will have set expectations that are realistic and achievable. I will make certain that the staff has a clear understanding of my expectations. As a leader it is my duty to lower the stress of the staff by engaging them in conversation.



Mark A. Price: The Hancock County Sheriff's Office's priorities are our community's safety and security. The Sheriff's Office will continue to work to reduce crime and engage the citizens of Hancock County through community policing programs. The strength of our community lies in its ability to protect individuals who abide by the laws of our county, state, and country. Compliance with the law is the foundation of our county and our nation. Recruitment and retention of deputies and staff is vital for the Sheriff's Office to ensure that everyone remains as safe as possible in our community. Like any other employer, finding good, qualified employees is challenging, particularly with the low unemployment we're experiencing in Hancock County. That's why I established the Cadet Program with the Hancock County Sheriff's Office to help create a pipeline of individuals interested in law enforcement and protecting our community. We're now starting to see that program pay off, as we just graduated our first cadets to deputies in the department, and we're forecasting to be fully staffed by the end of 2024.

Q. What steps will you take to actively listen to the concerns and perspectives of all community members, including those with differing opinions?



Mike A. Cortez: I believe in maintaining an open transparent line of communication to ensure all concerns are heard. An approach I would take is to increase the number of community-based surveys to ensure the level of service provided to the community is being monitored on a more consistent basis. I would also ensure the formation of focus groups to delve into specific issues to understand the diverse perspectives. Collaboration with community organizations will also help us ensure concerns from all demographics are being heard.



Daniel R. Harmon: When having conversations, I must have an open mind, be empathetic and actively listen. I have found that different points of view can be very beneficial to the growth of our community. If an agreement cannot be reached, you show respect for the person and their point of view. We can have differing opinions and walk away with a new understanding of what each other believes. At the end of the conversation, I will shake hands and make sure the other person knows that I value them and their input. Even if we cannot completely agree, it is rare that we come away from a conversation without recognizing a different perspective. Open conversation is key.



Mark A. Price: Years of experience serving the public have taught me the importance of listening, learning, and implementing feedback. I am a proponent of the community policing philosophy, which emphasizes the importance of being visible in our community and open to suggestions for improvement. Throughout the years, I have been invited to attend various meetings and group functions where I acted as a liaison to the public and heard their concerns. Gathering information and analyzing it is crucial to determine the best course of action. I understand that different opinions may arise, but I feel that listening to those opinions is a healthy way for the Sheriff's Office to be an integral part of our community and find new opportunities for growth and collaboration. At the end of the day, it's the people who live in Hancock County that make it a special community. The Sheriff's Office is simply a part of the community, and we need everyone in the County working together to help it remain a great place to live, work, and raise our families.

Q. How do you plan to engage with local businesses to understand their concerns and gather input when making decisions that may impact them?



Mike A. Cortez: Part of my campaign has been to meet with community stakeholders to identify any gaps that may exist between their organizations and the Sheriff's Office. As a result of these meetings, I have found value in these collaborative efforts to identify how our services together can provide an enhanced value to the community. If elected, the formation of focus groups will be utilized to meet with specific demographics to discuss the effect of major decisions that may impact their groups.



Daniel R. Harmon: As a public servant, it will be my duty to inform our citizens and businesses of changes in laws, policies and any incidents that will affect the safety and health of the community. I must be transparent in my duties. When it comes to notifying the public and business, I will utilize social media, media outlets and emergency broadcast systems when the information needs to be deployed rapidly. When it comes to issues that could have an impact on the community and businesses, I will make sure that public forums will be conducted, and that the community has access to express their concerns. I will create an advisory board of community and business members to ensure that the operations of the Sheriff's Office meet the expectations of the community and do not cause significant impacts to the day to day lives and operations within the community. .



Mark A. Price: Local businesses in Findlay and Hancock County are the foundation of our community. The Sheriff's Office must maintain open communication and foster working relationships with the businesses in our area. This way, we can provide the necessary support for their employees and ensure the safety and security of their operations. Without consistent and clear communication, the Office, County, and Community can't grow and prosper. Community-oriented policing requires the input of everyone in our County, and that includes local business leaders and their employees. By assisting our local business community with their needs, we ensure strong relationships among all parties, leading to a stronger community. I plan to have a continual dialog with business leaders, perhaps through a monthly or quarterly open meeting, to make sure their concerns are addressed and to help them better understand the goals and challenges of the Hancock County Sheriff's Office.

Q. What specific strategies and initiatives would you champion to effectively increase engagement and communication with the people you represent and/or protect, ensuring their voices and concerns are heard and addressed?



Mike A. Cortez: During my career, I've had the opportunity to champion the community policing philosophy. I will enhance this philosophy by furthering community policing-based programs, such as Sheriff's Citizen Academy, block watch programs, crisis intervention and mental health, supporting community-based events, social media engagement, cultural awareness and diversity training and youth-based programs. My end goal is to create an environment of transparency, trust, and collaboration with the community, so all voices may be heard. This can ultimately enhance the effectiveness of our members and increase the efficiency of public safety and well-being.



Daniel R. Harmon: My strategy to make sure the voices are heard would be to have an open-door policy to the Sheriff's Office. I want to remove the fear of retribution and instill confidence that the community's voice will be heard. I will be a Sheriff that engages the public in conversation outside of the walls of the Sheriff's Office. I cannot expect the community to always come to me, I must seek out the community. I will be in the schools engaging our youth in open conversations and education. I want to win back the respect for law enforcement. I will assure the community that I will not tolerate the misconduct of law enforcement. I will be the first to condemn substantiated misconduct whether it happens here or elsewhere. I need to reassure our citizens that our law enforcement officers will conduct themselves with dignity and respect for our citizens. I will implement a process for complaints and complements of the Sheriff's Office staff and make notifications of the outcomes to the complainant.



Mark A. Price: The philosophy of community policing aims to create a partnership between the Sheriff's Office and the citizens of Hancock County. Sheriff Heldman started this initiative as a strategic way to proactively bring the community and the Sheriff's Office together to reduce crime and encourage personal accountability. By involving the Sheriff's Office with the community, we encourage citizens to assist law enforcement in keeping our County safe. As Sheriff, I'll continue to support and promote our successful Citizens Sheriff's Academy. This free program allows any Hancock County resident to attend nine sessions on how the Sheriff's Office operates. The more people know about how we operate, the better equipped they are to bring their concerns forward and to understand how the Sheriff's Office can help them. Additionally, I'll continue and expand upon other outreach programs, including our Sheriff's Resource Officer program, our participation in community events like the Hancock County Fair and Balloon Fest, and other educational opportunities.

The Chamber Encourages You to Review the Entire Ballot

Please be informed and carefully review all of the issues on the March 19th ballot for Hancock County.
A complete list (and ballot text) can be found at HancockBoardofElections.com.

Local Issues

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| Issue 1 : Arcadia LSD | Renewal of 2.5 mills for the purpose of avoiding an operating deficit for 4 years |
| Issue 2 : Arcadia LSD | Annual income tax of 1% for 5 years for the purpose of current operating expenses |
| Issue 3 : Bluffton EVSD | Renewal 3.541 Mills for 5 years for the purpose of avoiding an operating deficit |
| Issue 4 : Riverdale LSD | Additional 2.0 Mills for the purpose of general permanent improvements for a continuing period of time |
| Issue 5 : Hancock County Board of Developmental Disabilities | Renewal 2.50 Mills for the purpose of providing for the operation of community programs and services authorized by county boards of developmental disabilities, for the acquisition, construction, renovation financing, maintenance, and operation of developmental disabilities facilities for 5 years |
| Issue 6 : Hancock Park District | Replacement 0.8 Mill for the purpose of maintaining, improving, developing and promoting the Hancock Park System, conserving natural resources, acquiring additional parks and developing new recreational facilities as the Hancock Park District Board of Park Commissioners deems appropriate, and enabling the Hancock Park District to support parks and recreational facilities owned or operated by townships, villages, and cities located throughout Hancock County for 8 years |