

Terry Force

Why are you running for office?

I have served for many years on the Board of Directors for Blue Vally Technologies holding the office of President since 1998. I have served as Mayor of the City of Wheaton for the past 15 years or so. I am currently on the Pottawatomie County Economic Development Corporation Board, having held the office of President for two years. My survey business has taken me to all parts of the County. In my business, I deal with many County departments. Having said all this, I believe my leadership experience and my knowledge of the county will be a tremendous asset to the Board of County Commissioners. With a possibility of 4 new Commissioners (three for sure) I will be able to hit the ground running without a lot of leadership training.

What do you consider the biggest challenge of the position you are running for? What areas of county government need improvement and why?

I believe there will be a bit of a learning curve with five Commissioners. Getting all five to try to work together will be very important. I do not have an 'agenda' and I do not think there needs to be any wholesale changes made. Some tweaks may be needed here and there, but that may come later. I am a firm believer in 'if it ain't broke - don't fix it'.

How long have you been a part of the Pottawatomie County community? To what extent have you been a part of local government in the county?

I am a sixth generation Pottawatomie County resident. I was born in the Onaga Hospital and raised in Wheaton. I worked for two different engineering companies from 1977-1989. My family and I moved back to Wheaton in 1990 and currently, my wife and I live in the same house my grandparents built in 1929. I have served for many years on the Board of Directors for Blue Vally Technologies holding the office of President since 1998. I have served as Mayor of the City of Wheaton for the past 15 years or so. I am currently on the Pottawatomie County Economic Development Corporation Board, having held the office of President for two years.

Regarding your prospective position, what do you consider your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?

I believe my various levels of leadership in the organizations mentioned above will be one of my strengths, as well as my knowledge of the county. I think a weakness would be not knowing the day-to-day function of the Board of County Commissioners, but I am very eager to learn.

It's no secret that Pottawatomie County has broad and diverse demographics and culture. Please describe how you intend to strike a balance and serve everyone in the county.

I believe that is where Planning and Zoning come into the picture. All areas of the county are zoned, so that would be a great place to start. I will do my best to preserve the rural beauty of District #5. The highway 24 corridor will be the area of concentration for development and housing.

What is Pottawatomie County's role in spurring job creation?

Since I serve on the Pott County Eco-Devo board, I am aware of the various programs and funding opportunities that are available for not only job creation of new businesses, but also job retention and growth of existing businesses. The very good relationship Pottawatomie County has with the Manhattan Chamber and the Greater Manhattan Economic Partnership will bode well for the county as well.

What should Pottawatomie County's relationship with other local governments (cities of Wamego, Onaga, St. George, Westmoreland, school boards) look like?

This is one area I think the County needs to improve in. Listening to what is being said in some of the meetings I have attended, it seems the county needs to mend some fences. I am not saying the

county needs to open their checkbook, but they need to be more receptive and responsive to the various needs of the cities. The county also needs to be respectful of the concerns of the various school boards as well.

What are your plans for preserving farm ground while also creating development opportunities and jobs throughout the county?

As I mentioned earlier, zoning will play a big part. The rolling hills and pastures as well as the productive farm ground of District #5 needs to be protected as much as possible. It is no secret as to the impact the agriculture industry plays in the economy of the county. The production of all agriculture products by the farmers and ranchers needs to be emphasized and enhanced. It seems like there is always good help needed in this industry. With careful and thought-out planning, development along the US 24 corridor will be essential in order to create jobs. This will only happen with the proper infrastructure in place.

Given Manhattan's continued expansion eastward, what should Pottawatomie County's relationship with the City of Manhattan look like?

The needs of the residents of the county must be first and foremost to the county. Open dialogue and the cooperation between the county and the city of Manhattan should continue and improve. Once again, planning is very important using the Pottawatomie County 2040 plan will be a good guide.

How would you approach the potential decommissioning of Jeffrey Energy Center?

My research shows the current plan is to take unit three off line in 2030 and take units one and two off line in 2039. I understand this plan is not set in concrete, so it could change with the stroke of a pen. It seems the Southwest Power Grid (of which Evergy belongs) is struggling to meet demands today as it is. My hopes are that these dates will be pushed back. However, if the dates are not pushed back, it might be a good opportunity for Evergy to install solar panels on their property. I would rather see them put there instead of occupying the fertile bottom ground along highway 24. Hopefully, by this time the Scorpius project may be up and running as well as some other industry that may come our way.

Please share your approach to crafting a budget for Pottawatomie County.

I understand the Administration Department is responsible for creating the budget using the input of all the departments across the county. It is the Commissioner's duty to review, question and approve the budget. It is a task that is not to be taken lightly. I have been a part of the budgeting review process for many years. I believe that experience will be very beneficial to the county.

What are your takeaways from the Pottawatomie County 2040 Plan? What stands out to you?

The first thing that stood out to me is the Plan was adopted in 2019. I think there are several sections where the data needs to be updated. I believe the development plans need to be reviewed. One section I found particularly interesting was the section on Broadband. Blue Valley Technologies has been fiber to the home for the Onaga and Westmoreland communities since 2006-2007. The rest of the exchange areas were upgraded to fiber to the home shortly thereafter. WTC has been plowing fiber for many years and have expanded their footprint throughout the Southern portion of the county at a fevered pitch. Twin Valley has the Northwest part of the county covered. It seems the Northeast part of the county could be improved.

A two-day training session by the Kansas County Commissioners Association (KCCA) will take place in Topeka for newly elected county commissioners. What will you hope to accomplish at that training?

I have attended many seminars and training sessions over the years. A person can learn a lot in these sessions. What I have discovered is that sometimes you can gain a tremendous amount of knowledge networking with other people having the same concerns as you. I plan on learning as much as possible and bringing this knowledge back to the county and putting it to good use.