

Candidate Answers – Sheriff

Troy Knudson

1. How will you work to make law enforcement in Rock County better suited to work with marginalized communities and people with mental illnesses?

As Law Enforcement Services Commander, I initiated the implementation of both the Police Training Officer Program for new deputies and Crisis Intervention Training for current law enforcement officers. Both of these programs are designed to assist officers in better understanding the root issues behind the symptomatic behaviors that they encounter. These programs help officers identify community resources that may offer a better solution than simply relying on the criminal justice system. While an arrest provides immediate short-term relief of the problem, helping the affected individual resolve the underlying issue is a better solution. Properly applied, this approach will hopefully result in fewer return visits and less impact on the criminal justice system and taxpayers, which is a better outcome for everyone involved.

Another strength that I would bring to the table as the next Sheriff is my training as a sociologist with an emphasis in research and analysis, as well as, a sincere passion for the welfare of the people in our community. When one attempts to address issues such as use of force, disproportionate confinement, or hiring practices, we have to be able to evaluate the system and identify areas that are not fair and collectively move towards correcting those issues. I have used these skills on a number of occasions through the years to make improvements at the Sheriff's Office, and I think that these skills will continue to be important as we attempt to make Rock County a better place for all community members.

2. What do you think the role of law enforcement is in working with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)? What are the pros and cons?

Justice, fairness, understanding, compassion, integrity, and always doing the right thing for the right reason are the principles that have guided me as a law enforcement officer through the years. Working with ICE requires careful consideration as I plan the potential course as the Sheriff of Rock County for the next four years. I believe that nearly all of us, if we think back just a few generations, can identify with the plight of those in our country, often with families, who have citizenship and immigration issues.

Fortunately, we have policies and precedent to follow and the guidance of other Sheriff's Offices who have struggled with these issues. Currently, if ICE is attempting to apprehend a violent or dangerous individual, and they ask for our assistance, we will help as we would assist any other agency in that position. Removal of that type of offender seems reasonable to me in our effort to protect our community and reduce a potential burden on our criminal justice resources. We will also comply with detainers or holds that are issued under specific circumstances on inmates held in our custody, but there are few of these. We have not, however, participated in wide sweeps of individuals whose only offense is their lack of citizenship status, and I do not see that policy changing in the future. Deportation of that type of individual is an extraordinary expense, and it fosters fear and distrust when establishing better relationships with our community is the priority.

3. What would you change about the way the department is currently being run?

First of all, I would like to say that it has been an honor and privilege to have worked at the Sheriff's Office for the past nearly 30 years. I am proud of the legacy of those who have gone before me, and I am proud of the courageous, compassionate, and professional people who work at all levels of the agency now. When I think of the serious cases or dangerous situations that we have resolved, the help that we have been able to provide during tragedies, and the support that we have of our citizens, I feel that we are doing many things right.

Moving forward, I do not wish to lose any of this momentum. I want to increase the effectiveness of our criminal justice system by improving coordination between law enforcement agencies and other first responders, as well as, with every component of the criminal justice system. We need to strategize together to develop a more cooperative and comprehensive approach to the issues that feed our criminal justice system. I want to more effectively understand and address the root problems that drive crime through even better interaction with our community. Lastly, I want to continue to work towards being more proactive, instead of reactive, when addressing issues. Hopefully, with this approach, we can resolve small problems before they become much larger.

Candidate Answers – Sheriff

Jude Maurer

1. How will you work to make law enforcement in Rock County better suited to work with marginalized communities and people with mental illness?

The Rock County Sheriff's Office has a rich history of supporting and employing community-based programs and events such as National Night Out, Special Olympics, Coffee with a Cop, Beloit Boys and Girls Club Badges for Baseball, Janesville Mobilizing for Change, Cops and Kids Foundation, Shop with a Cop, Police Explorers Post for Rock County Youth, recruiting at local colleges, and hunter and boater safety courses. As sheriff, we will continue these community-based programs and events in order to remain aligned with those we serve and protect.

Aside from community-based programs, whose success relies heavily on citizen participation, Rock County is readying implementation of the Evidence Based Decision Making Initiative. In short, the initiative will enable law enforcement officials to enforce laws more equally, objectively and without discriminating toward any individual or group. Incarcerating those who are a danger to our community, while providing diversion or deferred prosecution programs to those identified as not being a danger to our community, will reduce victimization and unnecessary incarceration. Lastly, the initiative, through training and services outside of the criminal justice system, will provide enhanced outcomes for individuals living with mental illness.

2. What do you think the role of law enforcement is in working with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)? What are the pros and cons?

Securing amicable relationships between county, state, and federal law enforcement authorities ensures equal enforcement of the law and equal services to our community. Trusting one another to treat all Rock County citizens equally, regardless of race or national origin is a shared value and endeavor toward securing rights contained in our State and Federal Constitution. Whether real or perceived, inflammatory or insensitive actions taken during immigration enforcement proceedings diminishes human dignity and our core values. Cooperating or sharing information with officials from Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection regarding immigration status does not impugn our values and mission.

Therefore, as sheriff, we will continue with the same immigration policy we have operated under for years. We will continue to serve community members, regardless of race or national origin, in a manner in which they feel safe in reaching out to us for help. If overwhelming evidence exists a member of our community illegally entered the United States in violation of federal criminal law or violation of federal civil law for having stayed beyond the legal period of time, we will notify federal authorities. We will not detain any member of our community, unless federal authorities request a hold. Likewise, incarcerated persons will not be held simply for immigration violations, unless federal authorities place a hold and make arraignments for practicable transfer.

3. What would you change about the way the department is currently being run?

I will incorporate a more employee focused or people-centered culture to ensure core values remain tangible and known within our ranks. Empowering and engaging employees at every level will increase their sense of pride, fellowship, and loyalty to the Sheriff's Office and, in return, to our community. Forming the Bureau of Professional Standards will aid in this endeavor.

I will walk the talk, just like I have been doing for 23 years. I will make up and down communication to all staff members a priority by attending briefings to provide operational updates, while seeking feedback to ensure frontline employees work in the most effective and efficient environment possible. Likewise, I will visit all Rock County law enforcement leaders to ensure our cooperative spirit remains alive with an eye towards combining repetitive resources.

Goals will be identified and prioritized until resolved. I will reestablish the position of lieutenant, while eliminating many of the higher salaried captain positions through attrition. The many duties of shift sergeants limit their ability to lead, mentor, and supervise during calls-for-service. Having a lieutenant perform administrative duties at the shift level will allow our sergeants time to mentor and provide quality control. Establishing a robust career path for correctional officers through the rank of corporal is imperative. I will gladly work with union leadership to see this endeavor finally comes to fruition.

As sheriff, I will remain on the frontlines and pledge ethical, transparent, honest, and principled leadership. No politics. No entitlements. No controversies.