Indivisible Sequim Candidate Questions

Clallam County Public Utility District Commissioner District #2

Candidate Information

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1. Why: Why are you running for PUD Commissioner?

Public service has been a central motivation throughout my career. For me, public service is a vital way to build community, and I know I can contribute to a forward-thinking, highly operational PUD.

My professional background is fundamental to understanding the complex processes and principles of utility operations. I am highly qualified, having advanced into senior management roles overseeing the practical and administrative regulations of electric, water, and wastewater utility construction and maintenance. Throughout my career, I have:

- Worked closely with elected officials to shape effective policies.
- Authored successful applications to secure critical infrastructure grants.
- Developed and successfully managed balanced annual budgets.
- Actively listened and responded to citizen input.

In both my professional and personal life, I strive to "tread lightly," keeping future generations in mind and ensuring they will be able to live comfortably and sustainably.

We are entering a period of rapid change. Our community faces complex challenges involving climate volatility, energy transitions, grid innovation, and ensuring information access in an era of deliberate misinformation. This is occurring during a time of disproportionate concentration of financial assets and economic power globally.

As a PUD Commissioner, I believe it is vital to inform, encourage, and guide our community using a thoughtful, proactive approach. This ensures necessary utility transitions yield the greatest value to ratepayers today and long into the future. We cannot afford to be left behind, nor can we gamble solely on legacy systems that are increasingly vulnerable to a warming climate.

> **A Crucial Example:** This past year, the hydroelectric dams that produce more than **80%** of our PUD power narrowly avoided the severe seasonal drought impacting Washington State. This near-miss occurred only because a significant portion of the

hydroelectric watershed is located in Canada. Furthermore, Clallam County remains on the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) load-shed list, meaning our local transmission can be curtailed in the event of unmanageable power losses elsewhere on the regional grid.

We still have a window of opportunity to make choices that lead to greater community resilience and a secure, cost-effective energy future. The PUD is currently exploring promising technologies ranging from microgrids and enhanced geothermal production to green hydrogen, while continuing to support residential solar and energy-efficient heat pumps. I support continuing this research and collaborating with other PUDs and the BPA on grant-funded pilot projects. This allows us to identify successful, cost-effective innovations that earn community acceptance. Working in this incremental, measured manner minimizes the financial impact on utility rates.

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2. Background and Experience: Please share the professional and personal experiences that best prepare you for serving as a PUD Commissioner.

My employment history has provided me with a rich opportunity to learn valuable trades, master technical skills, and manage diverse work environments.

- **Early Construction Experience:** As a teenager, I began working as a carpenter in residential construction. I eventually advanced to become a project manager for a company in Alaska that pioneered super-insulated homes featuring double-stud walls and energy recovery ventilation systems. When that company failed after selling its model home below cost (prior to my hiring), I was tasked with delivering that difficult reality to stakeholders. I successfully managed the ongoing construction, negotiated with the buyer, and mediated internal conflict. That early experience taught me the profound value of sound engineering, transparent communication, and the enduring lessons that come from managing a crisis.
- **Engineering and Public Works Leadership:** Motivated to deepen my technical expertise, I earned a Civil Engineering degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks while working for the City of Fairbanks. Following graduation, I joined the nationally recognized municipal engineering firm R.W. Beck, relocating to their main office in Seattle. This launched a public works and construction management career spanning more than 30 years.
- **Port Townsend Public Works:** Looking to raise a family in a scenic, rural environment, my wife and I sought out the Olympic Peninsula's rain shadow. I accepted the position of Public Works Engineer for the City of Port Townsend during a period of rapid growth in the 1990s. There, I worked closely with city leadership and community members, overseeing capital projects, developing stormwater regulations, managing utility infrastructure, securing grants, and ensuring environmental compliance.
- **Island County & State Recognition:** I later helped launch a local Habitat for Humanity affiliate before joining Island County as the Assistant County Engineer. In this role, I led teams of over 100 personnel, delivered innovative, cost-saving road stabilization

programs, and implemented a countywide GIS mapping system funded by federal grants. My active involvement with the American Public Works Association led to my selection as the **2010 Public Works Leader for Washington State**.
- **Port Angeles Utility & Asset Management:** In the final phase of my career, I held senior leadership roles with the City of Port Angeles (overseeing City Light electric operations for two years) and the Port of Port Angeles. I focused on improving operational efficiency through cooperative purchasing agreements, strategic asset management, and preventative maintenance systems. These efforts directly reduced long-term infrastructure costs.

After decades of public service, I retired with a deep, comprehensive understanding of utility engineering, regional collaboration, and community-focused infrastructure solutions.

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3. Drought Response: The 2025-2026 winter snowpack has been recorded as one of the worst on record. How has the PUD prepared for drought, and what would you do to improve preparedness? If events on the ground move faster than expected, what should the PUD's response be, and what would you do to support it? What role would you play in educating the ratepayers about the and the PUD's response?

Our current power stability was a near-miss. The Canadian portion of the Columbia hydroelectric watershed—which acts as a massive seasonal power bank for the Pacific Northwest—experienced a much healthier snowpack than the watersheds within Washington State. This serves as a stark reminder of how critical it is to maintain strong relations with our northern neighbors. While the 1964 Columbia River Treaty has historically served as a model for international water cooperation, recent federal political friction and strained negotiations highlight the vulnerability of these agreements.

This "tale of two snowpacks" requires an urgent reassessment of our historical reliance on stable hydroelectric generation. It represents a structural shift for the BPA, which is increasingly likely to raise the wholesale rates charged to our PUD as it seeks alternative backup power sources—especially as massive AI data centers aggressively purchase existing energy assets.

Locally, extended droughts pose a severe threat to Clallam County's water systems. The PUD operates standalone water systems serving nearly 5,000 customers. Our storage tanks buy only a limited amount of emergency retention time, and several are in immediate need of repair or replacement. Because these systems rely entirely on groundwater, prolonged droughts can lower water tables. Over time, this requires deepening wells and replacing pumps—both of which are highly capital-intensive assets.

To improve our preparedness and handle rapid changes, I support the following actions:

- **Innovative Mitigation:** Our water systems manager, Bowen Kendrick, has appropriately issued a Level 2 water advisory. To mitigate long-term groundwater loss, he is

researching aquifer recharge and injection systems, which have successfully operated in places like Southern California for over 60 years by storing winter runoff underground for summer use. This concept faces regulatory hurdles from the State Department of Ecology, and I am prepared to work with state legislators to resolve this impasse so local pilots can move forward.

- **Advanced Hydrological Research:** I am highly interested in supporting research regarding the geologic permissivity of the Olympic mountain range and how it influences our groundwater table. Recent university studies in the Cascade Range revealed substantial subsurface water flows flowing through mountain bedrock. We need to fund and partner with academic institutions to map the water balance of the North Olympic Peninsula to accurately inform our long-term water management.
- **Public Engagement and Accountability:** As Commissioner, I will actively listen to our technical staff and expert regional resources to identify actionable solutions. I will be an outspoken advocate for our ratepayers when engaging with state legislators and regulatory departments.

Handling a drought effectively requires assembling knowledgeable stakeholders, comparing notes with neighboring districts, and leading transparent public evaluations. I would champion public workshops to gather community input, ensuring that drought responses are handled through open collaboration rather than top-down mandates. Properly conducted, crisis management can be an opportunity for community building.

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4. Local Renewable Energy: As the Pacific Northwest rapidly electrifies – driven by EVs, electric home heating and massive data centers – statewide demand for electricity is exploding. At the same time, shifting climate patterns and low snowpack threaten the long-term reliability of maximum hydro generation. What strategies should the Clallam PUD consider, that could add or expand local generation that can help our community prepare, without breaking the bank (e.g. community solar, net metering, microgrids and storage, etc.)?

I am a strong advocate for exploring viable localized power generation within and adjacent to Clallam County. We are currently utilizing grant funding to expand a solar array project at the eastern end of Sequim. This expansion includes a battery storage bank and a microgrid capable of operating independently ("islanding") during a wider grid outage to power critical infrastructure like the Civic Center, local commercial properties, and nearby residences. This pilot project serves as an ideal template for other regional microgrids. Because the PUD's financial contribution is limited to the grant match, local ratepayers are protected from high up-front capital costs. A similar microgrid strategy is being planned for the new PUD Operations Center near Fairchild Airport and the County’s Emergency Services building.

These projects expose our community to modern engineering solutions that add real resilience to our local grid. Moving forward, I support a multi-pronged strategy:

- **Support for Decentralized Rooftop Solar:** I fully support continuing the net-metered "rooftop" solar programs that many residents—particularly on the eastern side of the county—have invested in.
- **Integrating Smart Microgrid Switching:** Standard residential solar systems are grid-tied and automatically shut down during an outage to prevent back-feeding live electricity into downed lines, which protects responding utility line workers. Utilizing residential-scale microgrid switching technology allows a home to safely disconnect from the main grid and keep its lights on during an emergency. The PUD needs to establish clear administrative and regulatory frameworks to safely accommodate these consumer-owned systems as battery costs continue to decline.
- **Low-Income Assistance Balancing:** Because Clallam County currently enjoys relatively low electricity rates, the financial payback period for alternative residential systems can be long. However, rising wholesale regional rate pressures must be factored into our long-term plans. I want to highlight the PUD's recently approved program that takes excess power generated by solar residences and applies those credits to lower utility costs for low-income ratepayers. This dual-benefit approach assists vulnerable families while preserving the broad base of ratepayers who share the infrastructure costs of operating our countywide system.

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5. West End Transmission Reliability: The West End transmission reliability along the Port Angeles–Sappho #1 corridor is arguably one of the most critical, high-stakes infrastructure vulnerabilities facing Clallam County today. What should the PUD be doing to improve reliability, and what would you do to support that effort?

Fortunately, the vulnerability of the BPA transmission line along the West End is actively being addressed through ongoing collaboration between Clallam PUD and federal officials. Key improvements currently underway or scheduled include:

- **Access Road Upgrades & Landslide Remediation:** A major infrastructure project scheduled from Summer 2026 to Fall 2027 is underway to reconstruct several miles of rugged gravel access roads. This includes rerouting access corridors away from active landslide zones and replacing failing culverts with modern bridges designed to meet anadromous salmonid passage criteria.
- **Tsunami Evacuation Corridors:** Ensuring these access roads are thoroughly maintained is doubly vital, as they serve as critical alternative tsunami evacuation routes for our coastal communities.
- **High-Risk Line Modifications:** The BPA is actively modifying a high-risk, 10-mile stretch of the transmission line. This mitigation includes installing taller utility poles, applying specialized fire-wrap protections on existing wood structures, and expanding right-of-way tree-clearing zones.
- **Environmental Compliance:** Because portions of the corridor traverse sensitive habitats, construction schedules are strictly managed to protect species like the marbled

murrelet and Northern spotted owl, including adhering to dawn-and-dusk work restrictions during critical breeding seasons.

This progress reflects the persistent advocacy that our PUD staff and Commissioners have maintained with BPA officials. Historically, the BPA focused its grid investments primarily on major population centers and heavy industrial users. This policy has now been modified to also address underserved, rural regions. Given that the West End was previously identified as having some of the lowest electrical service reliability in the nation, this federal investment is a welcome change.

The Ongoing Challenge: The PUD must continue upgrading its own connecting distribution infrastructure in the West End. The core challenge remains finding cost-effective methods to deliver reliable power to a low-density, rural population living in a heavily forested environment. Low-density lines mean fewer ratepayers and a higher cost per customer served.

While undergrounding lines is frequently suggested to eliminate tree-related outages, it carries significantly higher installation costs, introduces long-term moisture degradation inside conduits, and remains vulnerable to mature tree roots tearing up buried cables when windstorms uproot large trees. I look forward to working closely with my fellow Commissioners and PUD engineers as they address West End residents, as they balance options and needs to achieve uniform standards of service countywide.

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6. Rising Power Costs and Rate Pressure: Ratepayers are facing sustained BPA rate increases, along with rising personal and material costs, while the PUD's load levels remain flat or are increasing much more slowly. How would you balance affordability with necessary investment?

Balancing stable electricity rates with long-term infrastructure affordability is a fundamental challenge that has faced Clallam PUD since its inception on December 7, 1940. Because the PUD is publicly owned, its ultimate success depends on transparent management that aligns with the needs of our ratepayer-owners.

The single worst choice a commission can make during periods of escalating costs is to defer or reduce routine system maintenance. This is a classic case of "pay now or pay significantly more later." Deferring maintenance shortchanges the system. Industry standards dictate that a utility must invest consistently in routine maintenance to maximize the lifespan of its physical assets while systematically building capital reserves to replace infrastructure *before* it fails.

Failing to do so results in expensive, unplanned emergency outages, forces the utility to purchase emergency replacement parts at volatile spot-market prices, and leaves the district without capital reserves when major components fail.

Cost Pressures Outside PUD Control	Internal PUD Solutions & Mitigation
Macroeconomic inflation and rising material costs	Implementing efficient administrative practices and rigorous policy reviews
Wholesale rate and transmission increases from the BPA	Retaining, properly training, and motivating a highly skilled local workforce
Exploding regional power demand outstripping supply	Strong operational oversight and transparent financial auditing
Risks of privatization or regional grid disruptions	Maintaining respectful, collaborative leadership with the General Manager

Our current utility staff demonstrates a high operational tempo and a commitment to excellence. To maintain this, the Commission must act with professionalism, compassion, and respect for our workforce, collaborating closely with the General Manager, Treasurer, and Auditor.

As a point of governance, the General Manager, Treasurer, and Auditor are the only three positions directly hired or terminated by the elected Commission. The Commission's primary role is high-level oversight. It is paramount that commissioners possess the professional experience to recognize early signs of mismanagement, operational negligence, or fiscal lack of care, taking corrective action before an organization becomes burdened by administrative chaos or diminished service standards.

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7. Data Centers: How should Clallam County and the PUD approach potential proposals for large data centers or other high-demand electricity users on the Peninsula?

From a practical infrastructure standpoint, it would be surprising if a major technology firm proposed a large-scale data center within the Clallam PUD service territory. Our region faces clear geographic constraints regarding available industrial acreage, redundant high-capacity fiber networks, large-scale water supplies, and massive surplus electrical transmission capacity. High-capacity industrial sites on the Peninsula, such as the former mill sites, reside within the City of Port Angeles' municipal utility jurisdiction, which is outside the PUD's service area.

However, if a substantive application for a high-demand electricity user or data center is submitted to the PUD, it must be evaluated objectively on a case-by-case basis. By law and regulatory practice, a public utility cannot arbitrarily reject an applicant simply out of personal bias.

We must thoroughly analyze the engineering capacity of our system to serve the request. There are scenarios where a well-structured industrial customer can actually improve system economics by maximizing grid utilization, absorbing off-peak power, offsetting fixed infrastructure costs for residential ratepayers, and providing a stable source of local employment. The Commission should remain open-minded, analytical, and objective, relying on thorough economic and engineering impact studies before making a final determination.

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8. Skills: Please highlight the skills needed to succeed as a commissioner at the PUD, as our community navigates the water and power challenges we will face over the next six years.

To successfully guide Clallam PUD through the complex water and energy challenges over the next six years, a Commissioner must possess:

- Strong critical thinking skills and a comprehensive knowledge of public utility mechanics.
- A disciplined reliance on expert technical and engineering data.
- A collaborative mindset to partner with neighboring utilities facing similar challenges.
- A commitment to community building and fostering productive relationships with local, state, and federal agencies, including the BPA network.
- Clear, transparent communication skills across all sectors, especially with our local ratepayers.
- A solutions-oriented approach to problem-solving, grounded in the professional humility to recognize that we all have strengths and weaknesses, and we accomplish the most when we help each other succeed.

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9. Other Challenges: What other challenges facing the Clallam PUD should be brought to the attention of the public?

One topic that occasionally surfaces in public discussions is the assertion that employee compensation at the PUD is less than competitive. Based on my review of the data, I disagree with that perspective.

The PUD's wages, salaries, and hourly pay structures remain highly competitive both within our local economy and when compared to utilities operating under similar economic conditions across the Pacific Northwest. Our utility personnel earn a fair and reasonable living, which is crucial given the current constraints on local housing availability and the impacts of inflation. Maintaining competitive compensation is vital to retaining the high-caliber technical staff and line workers who keep our grid secure.

10. Anything Else: What else would you like to tell us about yourself that will help us evaluate you as a candidate?

My perspective on infrastructure and engineering is deeply shaped by unique, hands-on personal experiences living in environments completely detached from modern utilities.

Lessons from the Peace Corps (Eswatini)

I served as a Peace Corps volunteer in a remote area of the Kingdom of Swaziland (now known as Eswatini). The community had no electricity, no telephone communication within 20 miles, and our drinking water had to be hand-hauled from a nearby stream and boiled. During my service, I helped organize an international workshop to construct hydraulic ram pumps. The workshop leaders were highly credentialed experts—including a former NASA engineer who had invented a method for manufacturing Teflon ball bearings.

Our chalkboard was covered in complex fluid-dynamics formulas proving how the kinetic energy of a water surge could pump water up to a significant elevation to supply the local school. Using portable generators and welding equipment, we worked late into the night fabricating these ram pumps from raw materials, hand-excavating the stream bed to create collection pools.

Initially, the project worked beautifully. The experts departed in celebration. However, within the first week, the system broke down. For six months, I personally took on the responsibility of sourcing replacement parts, drilling out sheared bolts, replacing failed seals, and attempting to keep the system running. Ultimately, after my departure, the community moved forward with installing a reliable, off the shelf, industrial Lister hydraulic ram pump unit.

> **The Takeaway:** That experience taught me a lifetime lesson about big ideas and grand promises of success that are followed by abandonment. It instilled in me a persistent determination to make things work in the real world and a deep respect for practical, field-tested application over theoretical engineering models. It also gave me firsthand experience living under an absolute monarchy where nepotism and social favoritism drove public decisions, cementing my deep commitment to transparent, democratic governance.

Living Off-Grid in Fairbanks

Later, while earning my Civil Engineering degree at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, I spent three years living in a cabin without electricity or running water. My weekly routine involved hauling empty water jugs to the university pool, completing my swim workouts, filling the jugs, and hauling my water back to my cabin.

While I chose these challenges as a young man and enjoyed testing my resourcefulness, these experiences taught me exactly how labor-intensive life becomes without reliable utilities. I can personally vouch that Clallam County would face an incredibly difficult time adjusting to the labor of hauling water from local streams or managing without electricity for more than a couple of days.

Given our unique geography—dependent on a single primary highway corridor that crosses numerous rivers, streams, and the Hood Canal—any extended regional grid failure would immediately disrupt the delivery of food, water, and medicine. While severe, long-term outages are rare, proper risk management dictates that the PUD must have robust, practical mitigation plans and resilient local backup infrastructure in place to safeguard our community.

A Detailed Work History

- **Residential Construction Management:** I began my career as a residential carpenter, eventually managing an Alaskan construction firm focused on pioneering energy-efficient, super-insulated homes. When the company faced financial failure due to a pricing error made prior to my arrival, I stepped forward to manage the building completion, mediate owner disputes, and negotiate transparently with the buyer. This underscored the critical need for sound financial projections and professional project management.
- **R.W. Beck & Municipal Engineering:** After earning my Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (BSCE) from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, I was recruited by R.W. Beck, a premier national municipal engineering firm, and relocated to their main office in Seattle. Seeking a rural, community-oriented lifestyle, my wife and I chose the Olympic Peninsula rain shadow as our home.
- **Port Townsend Public Works Engineer (5 Years):** During a period of intense growth in the early 1990s, I directed Port Townsend's public engineering initiatives. I frequently presented technical data to the City Council, conducted public workshops, drafted comprehensive stormwater management regulations, upgraded sewer and water mains, secured capital grants, managed consulting engineers, and navigated complex environmental permitting.
- **Community Leadership & Island County Assistant Engineer (10 Years):** I took a professional sabbatical to help establish a local Habitat for Humanity affiliate while operating a private engineering consultancy. I was subsequently hired as the Assistant County Engineer for Island County, where I managed four road divisions and a staff of over 100 personnel. I developed low-cost road maintenance strategies and implemented innovative landslide stabilization techniques that saved substantial public funds on major roadway reconstructions.
- **GIS Innovation:** I authored and secured a major federal grant to establish Island County's first state-of-the-art online Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping platform. By leveraging satellite GPS data, aerial imagery, and topographic LiDAR data, we built a comprehensive tool for parcel mapping, public health tracking, geohydrological studies, and water system management. This sophisticated system cost the county only a **$67,000** local match, with the remainder entirely covered by the grant.
- **Port Angeles Deputy Director of Operations & Port Operations Manager:** I transitioned to the City of Port Angeles as the Deputy Director of Operations, which included directing the operations of City Light for two years. I established regional cooperative purchasing agreements that allowed the city to participate in high-volume "buying clubs," significantly reducing material costs and administrative overhead. I also

optimized equipment procurement, balancing the purchase of new, essential machinery with high-quality state surplus equipment for low-use needs. I concluded my full-time career as the Operations Manager for the Port of Port Angeles, establishing a predictive, computerized maintenance management system designed to lower the long-term cost of infrastructure ownership through planned equipment replacements.

Following my retirement, I have dedicated time to local community service. I have spent three years serving as a volunteer and board member for Clallam Mosaic, a local non-profit dedicated to providing lifelong learning and advocacy for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I also have served as a volunteer coach for the local Special Olympics golf team.

I enjoy swimming 10,000-14,000 yards/week with the local masters swim. I just did my first open water swim in the Orca Bait swim off Ediz Hook. I also play pickleball at Carrie Blake Park. Both provide stimulating exercise and friendly conversations.

My career and personal experiences have proven to me that every individual in our community matters. We achieve our greatest successes when we focus on our mutual interests, our shared infrastructure, and working together to solve problems.