

Respondent



5

Anonymous



60:00

Time to complete



## 1. Name &amp; office you are seeking \*

Mark Thane, Candidate for re-election in House District 99

2. Housing inventories are at all-time lows in many Montana communities. As a result, rent and home sales prices are at all-time highs. Local land use regulations and development review processes add unpredictability, delays, and extra costs to developing new housing stock, directly contributing to the housing shortage and lack of affordability. State law provides the framework and authority for these local regulations and review processes. As a state legislator, you will be asked to balance many competing interests in debates over land use policy. **Will you support legislation that streamlines and supports new housing, even if it means local governments are given less control over housing development?**

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Lack of affordable/attainable housing is at a crisis level in many Montana communities. I believe leveraging resources to enhance the State Board of Housing programs is a key step to developing workforce housing. However, I believe adequate framework exists in statute to guide the drafting of local zoning regulations. Missoula's zoning regulations and zoning maps are 40+ years old and are currently undergoing a long overdue rewrite. A new draft, based on public comment, is due for release April 7th. The Missoula Board of County Commissioners is currently accepting public comment and will hold a public hearing on the proposed draft on May 5th. I believe the best solutions are those crafted as close to the problem as possible, in this case the local level. This affords for the greatest amount of public participation and the decision-makers (commissioners) are most accountable to the voters.

3. Property taxes are the primary funding source for local government services and infrastructure and help to fund public education. Increasing mill levies and increasing property value assessments have left many homeowners and commercial property owners asking for relief. **How would you propose providing property tax relief to Montanans?**

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I currently serve on the Revenue Interim Committee and we are completing a study of property taxes. Only 101 mills are levied at the state level (95 mills for state school equalization and 6 mills for the Montana University System). In Missoula more than 700 additional mills are levied to fund city/county government, local schools and a variety of special assessments. A significant number of mills are for projects the local voters have passed via ballot measures. Open space, school renovation/construction, Fort Missoula Regional Park, the City/County Library and the Urban Transportation District (Mountain Line) are all worthy projects that improve our quality of life and make Missoula an appealing community for business/economic development. However, that needs to be balanced with the ability of community members to live in the community and remain in their homes, let alone make home purchases affordable for those entering the housing market. We are a bit hamstrung because we have only two primary sources of revenue in the state: state income tax and property tax. Local taxing authorities must rely almost solely on property tax. The 2020 legislature reduced the state income tax rate, potentially further exacerbating the problem of property taxes. I intend to introduce/support legislation to deal with property taxes in a couple of ways. First, with significant increases in assessed values anticipated in the next appraisal cycle, I plan to introduce legislation to reduce the property tax rate to mitigate the effect of the increased valuations. Second, I will propose enhancing the existing property tax credits for elderly homeowners, disabled veterans, and the Property Tax Assistance Program (PTAP) for low income homeowners. I also continue to explore "property tax circuit breakers" as a potential avenue to reduce the property tax burden.

4. Montana is one of only a few states in which sellers of real estate are not required by state law to provide potential buyers with a statement disclosing the condition of the property. **Will you support legislation that requires sellers to provide buyers a disclosure statement?** \*

Many buyers have historically relied on property inspections as a contingency attached to a sale. However, in the current market many cash buyers are waiving inspections, which potentially freezes those wanting the assurance of an inspection out of the market. It seems reasonable, therefore, to require sellers provide a disclosure statement regarding the condition of the property.

5. New housing and businesses require a source of water. Connecting to municipal water services is not always an option as cities are not always able or willing to extend infrastructure. In these cases, a water right must be secured through a process governed by state law and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation regulations. Reform is necessary as securing a water right is often costly, uncertain, and time-consuming. This ultimately hurts consumers and our growing communities. **Will you support legislation to streamline water right permitting processes?** \*

Quite honestly, I am not very familiar with the process of securing a water right. It is my understanding that small residential wells may be permitted without securing a water right if the flow is below a certain level. I assume the concern expressed in this question is more related to commercial development and/or shared water systems in residential development. I would like to learn more about the issue and would say that it seems reasonable that there should be a streamlined, predictable process for securing such a right. I acknowledge that there may be a difference; however, between securing such for groundwater versus surface water.

6. One in five homes in Montana is serviced by an onsite septic system. If properly installed and maintained, septic systems are a safe and cost-effective means of waste disposal for homeowners and businesses. Some regulations on septic systems are enforced by local health departments, and enforcement is inconsistent. For instance, how bedrooms are counted for determining what size of system is necessary and how nonconforming systems are handled varies. **Will you support legislation that brings greater consistency to enforcement of regulations on existing septic systems?** \*

I agree that properly installed and maintained septic systems are appropriate for development not served by municipal wastewater systems. As technology continues to advance, such systems become increasingly effective. I also agree that uniform definitions and enforcement are necessary. I would support legislation to develop/clarify uniform definitions and supports uniform enforcement.

7. REALTORS® believe that private property rights are fundamental to our free-market system and are a cornerstone upon which this nation was founded. Our United States and Montana Constitutions recognize and protect the right to own property. A strong economy depends upon preserving the right to freely own, use, and transfer real property. **If elected, what approach will you take to balancing private property rights with public interests?** \*

Private property rights are fundamental. The right to freely own and transfer property must be protected. The right to freely use property should be restricted only when there is a significant public interest (safety, potential for off-site pollution/degradation of air/water, etc.).

8. The National Association of REALTORS include sexual orientation and gender identity anti-discrimination language in their code of ethics. Montana does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and /or gender identity. **As a state legislator would you support legislation to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and /or gender identity?** \*

I absolutely support legislation to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

9. Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number \*

Thane for HD99, Gary Hughes, Treasurer. P.O. Box 692, Missoula, MT 59806 Phone: 406-552-3957

10. Will you accept PAC contributions? \*

☒ Yes

☐ No

## Thank you!

We appreciate you taking the time to complete our survey so that we might better understand your position on key issues facing our community. The committee will be evaluating surveys received and responding within a few weeks regarding next steps.