

PATRICIA ROYAL JOHNSON



1. 2023 saw an almost total meltdown of the Quorum Court operation and much of county government. What could you do (or what did you do) as JP to improve the situation? 2023 can be described as an “almost total meltdown” partially because of the great progress members of the previous Quorum Court achieved by working together with our County Judge and elected officials prior to 2023. In the few years before the 2023 Quorum Court, I supported and witnessed the construction of three new county buildings, major improvements in our county budget and finances, and multiple bonuses and raises for our employees, to name a few. I felt we had the right kind of momentum going into 2023 and that momentum positioned us well if we kept our foot on the gas and continued to keep doing what was working. To do anything different, in my opinion, was to risk taking steps backward. That’s why in 2023 I continued to show up and participate in official meetings, ask questions before and after meetings about ordinances, and urged other members of the Quorum Court to continue the same spirit of cooperation that we had prior to the court membership changing in 2023.

2. What are two goals you would have as a JP in the next term and how would you pay for them if financing is required? 1. Jefferson County was the first county in the state to complete a solar project. I think there is room to dive even further into solar to bring more savings and energy independence to our county. The financing could be structured similarly to our initial energy efficiency plan.

2. The county should add a grant writer to assist every county department with obtaining and managing state and federal grants. This individual (or team if necessary) could ultimately pay for themselves with the funds they bring in and with support from all of our elected officials. We are potentially leaving millions in funding on the table without a coordinated, countywide grant process.

3. What are some of the key issues associated with your district and how would you address them? One of the problems that I find is that we don’t have enough street lighting. I understand, for my area, that it’s a city issue we should look into cooperating with the city on that issue.

4. We have heard complaints from county residents about the condition of the roads. Is the county doing enough to keep them in good shape? And what can a JP do to improve them? Roads are a big concern for our county and they have been for decades. I regularly communicate with our road department and County Judge. County Judge Gerald Robinson’s road department has completed more miles of resurfaced county roads than any previous judge on record. It’s important that when residents have an issue with roads I advocate for them and communicate with the Judge about their needs.

5. One of the jobs of the Quorum Court is to levy the various millages in the county. This year, because of the dysfunction previously mentioned, the levying of taxes went down to the wire and was approved at the last minute, putting at risk all of these millages and the operations those tax dollars fund. School superintendents and mayors became highly concerned because the inaction of the Quorum Court would have had catastrophic consequences for their operations. Can you say how you reacted during this period as a JP and why OR say how you would have reacted as a JP during this period? I was very upset about it. I felt that we should have approved it without reservation and I stated publicly multiple times that what some of the Court was doing was not correct and that we needed to support and take care of the needs of Jefferson County immediately.

WIN TRAFFORD

1. 2023 saw an almost total meltdown of the Quorum Court operation and much of county government. What could you do (or what did you do) as JP to improve the situation? I am not certain I would call it an almost meltdown. I would call it a complete lack of willingness to compromise and come together to properly handle the business of the county. As a previously elected official, I am concerned about the total disregard of respect for our tax-paying citizens a few showed.

2. What are two goals you would have as a JP in the next term and how would you pay for them if financing is required? We need a quorum court that properly handles the business of the county for its tax-paying citizens. Let's get all of our county roads fixed and properly maintained for our citizens so they can traverse them during all aspects of weather and emergency vehicles can handle emergencies with no issues. Neither of these should require extra financial assistance.

3. What are some of the key issues associated with your district and how would you address them? My district is comprised of the heart of the city limits of Pine Bluff, and the main issue I see is the lack of communication and cooperation within our quorum court to handle the county's business properly. I hope to be the voice of reason that can be that change.

4. We have heard complaints from county residents about the condition of the roads. Is the county doing enough to keep them in good shape? And what can a JP do to improve them?



While my district has no county roads, I have heard about and seen terrible conditions on many county roads. The county has not done enough to properly maintain the roads so citizens can access their properties during rainy conditions. While a JP cannot improve them, they can work with the county judge and county road department to implement a plan that will solve the issues over a short period. I will work on all of this, even though it is outside of my district.

5. One of the jobs of the Quorum Court is to levy the various millages in the county. This year, because of the dysfunction previously mentioned, the levying of taxes went down to the wire and was approved at the last minute, putting at risk all of these millages and the operations those tax dollars fund. School superintendents and mayors became highly concerned because the inaction of the Quorum Court would have had catastrophic consequences for their operations. Can you say how you reacted during this period as a JP and why OR say how you would have reacted as a JP during this period? I believe it is a travesty that the lack of cooperation and communication between different groups within the quorum court and county judge's office caused such a concern in our cities, communities and school districts.

Had I been a JP during that time, I would have done my best to reach out individually to every other quorum court member and the county judge to see if we could reach an agreement to satisfy all, and allow our cities and school districts to continue handling their own business without the worry of the county failing to vote to levy and collect these taxes.

6. Anything else you want to say? As a lifelong citizen of this county, I value all of our people and am excited about the future if we can all work together for the betterment of our county. I promise to be a part of the solution and vow to never be a part of the problem. I look forward to working with everyone in a respectful manner.