

# Jared Bell-District 1 Supervisor Candidate

**Tell us a little bit about yourself – your name, where you live, what you are passionate about and what experiences or skills you have that would enhance your position as a Supervisor on the County Board) and answer: What are your top three priorities for the County Board to focus on in the next two years?**

My name is Jared Bell, and I live just outside the Village of Somerset near the county line. I have raised my family of 3 boys, Tristin, Cooper, and Paxton, with my beautiful wife, Dawn, in the Somerset area for 15 years. The St. Croix County community is the best place to raise a family, and that is why my wife and I chose to settle down and raise our family here. Right now, we are in a serious crisis, as select county board members continue to focus on partisan politics in a non-partisan office. This is not the community that my children previously grew up in. I am passionate about creating change that helps every single person in my district and the county at large thrive. I have spent my career as a proven leader in the energy industry, managing contractors and other employees. We need members who have the ability to work together and hold each other accountable. My main priorities for my 2-year term would be returning common-sense leadership to the county board, managing our budgeted funds in responsible ways that will ACTUALLY create change for members of the county, and providing better opportunities and awareness regarding the rising issue of potentially dangerous drinking water consumption.

**There are several Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) in St. Croix County. Many have applied to expand the number of livestock with the DNR. What is your position with regard to CAFOs?**

This will be my first time holding office as a public official. With that comes a bit of a learning curve. From what I know about CAFOs, they have the potential to become very dangerous to the public drinking water infrastructure. My main job as a supervisor is maintaining safety within District 1 and the community of St. Croix County as a whole. That being said, when I take the position of Supervisor for District 1, I will do my due diligence in learning about this issue that is impacting the community.

**The land and water conservation staff have identified the primary source of contamination of ground and surface waters as excessive nitrates found in manure and chemicals used on cropland. What measures should the county take to inform and protect residents from the harmful effects of excessive nitrates? How would you encourage preservation of individuals' safe well water and farmland for agricultural use in this County?**

You can't fake statistics that have continued to show the same results. Over half of the county's population relies on these private wells, which are most affected by these increased nitrate levels. Nitrates cause terrible diseases and illnesses, like cancer, that can lead to death, especially in young children. The simple solution would be to just put in a reverse osmosis system, but that can cost upwards of \$10,000. This issue is of utmost importance to me because I chose to have a system put into my home. After all, our nitrate levels were dangerously high. For a while, we didn't know we had this problem until we were told to test our water. A lot of community members aren't aware of the importance of testing their water or even where to get it tested. We need to raise awareness throughout the community and ensure anyone can get their water tested if they want. We need to work with our farmers to help create a solution to this issue. Again, I will be able to create a better, actionable solution when I am the Supervisor for District 1.

**What can the County Board do to assist local town and village boards and city councils as they seek to provide not only affordable housing, but also a variety of housing options in their municipalities?**

The county board is always an available option for these local communities and municipalities to reach out to. We can offer advice on how to tackle this housing crisis, including referring to the St. Croix County Economic Development Corporation, which has conducted studies revealing broad demand for housing. However, the county board isn't supposed to act as "Big Brother," watching over every municipality. The board is here as a resource for local officials to use. We can help our towns and villages meet the growing demand for affordable housing by providing planning support, coordinating infrastructure, and connecting communities to funding and partnerships. When we work together regionally, we can create housing options that keep our workforce, families, and seniors right here in our county.

**Xcel Energy has proposed a large solar facility on nearly 3,000 acres in central St. Croix County. Projects of this size are under the jurisdiction of the Public Utility Commission of Wisconsin. What role do you feel the county should play in this project?**

The county's role in the Ten Mile Creek solar proposal is to protect public health, safeguard our environment, and ensure fairness for all landowners. We should pursue a strong Joint Development Agreement that addresses water, wildlife, safety, and long-term land restoration, and we should participate as an intervenor with the PSCW so the voices and concerns of St. Croix County residents are fully represented. The county board isn't necessarily responsible for delegating the final decision when it comes to putting in this solar farm, but I will do my best to ensure that we reach the best agreement possible. This opportunity for solar energy provides a good opportunity for the landowners it affects to have another income from land that is currently not in use. Again, I will work to always have the best interests of the community at heart.

**St. Croix County has grown in population in recent decades, driven in large part by our proximity to the Twin Cities. Over the next decade, growth is expected to flatten and potentially decline. What are the impacts of this shift in population as it relates to the county?**

Nationwide, we are experiencing a declining birth rate. Regardless of what someone might tell you, the truth is that for the past 30 years, yes, St. Croix County has been growing, but in the next 10 years, we are going to plateau and decline. The impact that this will have on the community is decreased tax revenue, which will decrease our ability to maintain and increase infrastructure. This is a problem that we seriously need to prepare for so that future generations can afford to live in this great community like we are able to now. We need to foster growth and draw in couples who feel they are able to afford to start a family in our county. When I am District 1's Supervisor, I will be better equipped to learn more and tackle this issue.

**In the next year, the County will consider expansion of the jail and other infrastructure projects, expected at a cost of \$46 million. If passed, this would result in a bond issue to the taxpayers. What is your position on the proposed expansion of the jail and infrastructure improvements?**

When looking at the overall jail expansion, multiple factors have to be taken into account. A big issue is the growing number of incarcerated individuals within the county's system. We need to be able to accommodate this growing population of individuals, which means updated facilities and expansion. Another huge importance is keeping particular individual groups safe within the system. This is an issue that I would need to take a deeper look at when considering whether this \$46 million plan is really the right dollar amount. I will need to learn more about this issue when I become a county supervisor, and then I will be able to make the decision that best supports the people I represent. We should also dig into the deeper issue of why we have so many incarcerated individuals when we compare ourselves to a neighboring county with a bigger population but relatively the same number of incarcerated individuals.

**How would you address potential cuts to federal funding for health care and social services?**

We need to make sure that everyone has access to these social services and health programs that are beneficial to them. We will have to better provide our insight to the Community Health Assessment and the Community Health Improvement Plan so that health issues and concerns that really affect the people of St. Croix County are addressed. Healthcare should never be a partisan issue; it is a human service, and healthcare access allows people to continue being contributing members of our community. Another solution to this could be allocating more of our board budget to promote better public health and safety concerns.