

## **Justin Terbeest**

### **District 2**

#### **1. CAFOs**

Agriculture is a major part of St. Croix County's economy and heritage, and CAFOs are part of that modern agricultural landscape. At the same time, agriculture has to coexist with neighbors, water resources, and other land uses, and recognize the value of our longstanding local and small farmers. My approach is to respect property rights and the economic importance of traditional farming, while ensuring larger operations meet environmental standards and do not cause direct harm to surrounding communities or water resources. The county's role should be to follow the law, enforce existing standards fairly, and work collaboratively with producers and residents to ensure agriculture remains viable and environmentally responsible.

#### **2. Nitrates and Water Quality**

Clean water is fundamental for both residents and agriculture. If excessive nitrates are impacting groundwater, the first step is transparency and education, making sure residents understand testing options and the risks involved so they can make appropriate choices for their households. The county should support well-testing programs, public information efforts, and partnerships with farmers to encourage conservation practices that reduce runoff and nutrient loss. Protecting water quality and maintaining productive farmland are not competing goals; in many cases, better land stewardship improves both long-term agricultural productivity and environmental health.

#### **3. Housing**

Housing availability and affordability are essential for keeping our communities strong. The county's role is not to dictate development in every municipality, but it can support local governments by providing planning tools, infrastructure coordination, and data that help communities make informed decisions. Encouraging a mix of housing types (starter homes, workforce housing, and options for seniors) helps ensure that people who work in the county can also live here. Collaboration between towns, cities, and the county will be key to making sure growth happens thoughtfully and sustainably.

#### **4. Xcel Solar Project**

Large energy projects like this are primarily regulated at the state level, so the county does not ultimately decide whether the project moves forward. Our role is to carefully review impacts,

represent the interests of local residents, and negotiate where possible to protect land use, infrastructure, and environmental considerations. That means focusing on transparency and making sure the community's concerns are heard, while recognizing the legal limits of county authority. Local government should approach projects like this thoughtfully and pragmatically rather than symbolically.

## **5. Population Trends**

Changes in population trends can affect everything from workforce availability to school enrollment and local tax bases. If growth slows or levels off, the county will need to focus even more on maintaining a strong quality of life and supporting economic opportunity. That means making sure our infrastructure, housing options, and natural amenities continue to attract residents and businesses. St. Croix County has many advantages, proximity to the Twin Cities, strong communities, and natural beauty; and thoughtful planning will help us continue to build on those strengths.

## **6. Jail Expansion**

Public safety infrastructure is important, but projects of this scale require careful scrutiny. Before committing to a large bond issue, the county should make sure the expansion is truly necessary, explore alternatives, and ensure the project is designed efficiently and responsibly. Taxpayers deserve a clear understanding of the costs, benefits, actual need for such a project, and long-term financial impacts. My approach would be to evaluate the proposal carefully, ask the right questions, and support solutions that maintain safety while respecting fiscal responsibility.

## **7. Federal Funding Cuts**

Federal funding plays an important role in supporting healthcare and social services at the county level. When those resources are reduced, counties are going to face difficult choices about how to maintain essential services. The first step would be assessing the potential impact and working with local partners to identify priorities. Counties will need to advocate for residents, seek efficiencies where possible, and collaborate with state and community organizations to maintain critical support systems for vulnerable populations.