

The Bandera PROPHEET

February 20, 2024

Candidates Q&A - Bandera County Sheriff

The Bandera Prophet invited the candidates for Bandera County Sheriff to participate in a Q&A. Each candidate's response is published in alphabetical order by their last name.

The questions and answers are as follows:

1. Why are you running for sheriff?

Daniel R. (Dan) Butts: I have lived in Bandera County for over 43 years. I have made Bandera County my home and the place I have raised my family. I have served as a peace officer in Bandera County for over 38 years and Sheriff of Bandera County for the past 11 years. I have a commitment to the employees at the Bandera County Sheriff's Office and the Citizens of Bandera County. I feel an obligation to my community and believe I still have something to give back to the community and the people of Bandera County.

Will Dietrich: I am running for Sheriff because of what the Citizens of Bandera County are telling me. They tell me they are tired of calling the Sheriff's Office and no one comes to help them. Tired of being scared because the criminals and drugs have taken over their neighborhoods. They tell me they are scared because of the unsolved murders, missing persons, out of control crime and the lack of information. They tell me they are fed up with deputies that show up and won't do their jobs because the victim doesn't have video of the crime being committed. They tell me they are tired of calling the Sheriff's Office and leaving a message and no one calls them back. They tell me they are tired of not trusting the Sheriff's Office.

Josh Teitge: Selfless service has been pivotal in my life. As a young Eagle Scout, through my 23 years of Active-Duty Service to our Nation as an Aviation Officer and Apache Air Mission Commander and Leader or my 25 years of service in Law Enforcement, I have always had a desire to serve my community. Bandera County is my home and I cannot think of a more effective way to continue to serve this incredible community while ensuring that my family and our citizens are safe to pursue life, liberty, and happiness for generations to come.

2. What would you like to see changed at the Sheriff's Office, and how do you plan to implement those changes?

Butts: We are currently working to replace the county communication system with a new system that will provide better countywide coverage and inoperability and will be an asset for all emergency services in the county. Our current reporting system at the Sheriff's Office has been in place for over 30 years. We are currently working to replace the old system with a new system that will allow the Sheriff's Office to connect to the other offices in the county and make our information easier to access. This explains two of the things we currently have in the works, however my goal is to work to increase the pay for the Sheriff's Office employees. The Bandera County Sheriff's Office is the lowest paid in the area, and it is increasingly difficult to find good, qualified applicants. We have applied for a state grant for \$350,000 that will be applied to salaries. This will help but will still not get us to equity with the surrounding counties. I will be working with the county commissioners and judge to find the funds to bring us up to a level where we can compete for employees with the surrounding counties. We currently have good insurance for the county employees, however if the employee has a family and adds them to their insurance it is very expensive. I will work to see if we could decrease the cost of the family insurance so that our employees can afford to cover their families on their insurance.

Dietrich: The Bandera County Sheriff needs to recruit, hire, train and retain professional employees in order to deliver the level of service the citizens deserve. We need more officers patrolling our neighborhoods, looking for crime, drugs or people to help. We must rebuild the relationships with the community that have been damaged. We need to enforce professional, customer service and training standards on all Sheriff's Office employees. We will be open, up front and honest with our citizens about crime and safety issues and provide equal protection under the law to everyone.

We need a Sheriff that is actively engaged in the community. A Sheriff that is accessible to the citizens. When you have a problem, you should be able to sit down and talk to the Sheriff, whether it's in his office or at a table at the OST.

You see me out in the community now, I am accessible now. I am open to sitting down with anyone and listening to their concerns or ideas for improving the Sheriff's Office. That will not change.

Teitge: There are four areas that I believe need to change to facilitate a more efficient and effective department. Those areas are operations, training, modernization, and standardization. Operationally, the department needs to have a clearly established Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) where every aspect of departmental operations is outlined and standardized. This will prevent confusion by setting a clearly defined procedure for every situation and provide guidance to all leaders as to my intent for departmental procedure. All employees need to know not only how to operate while conducting their specific and assigned duty, but additional areas such as promotion, new hire training, selection for special assignment, off duty employment, training requirements, work expectations and evaluations, disciplinary actions, and open-door policy. It is impossible to hold anyone to a standard if that standard is not clearly defined and communicated. Training is essential in an ever-evolving law enforcement environment. The State of Texas requires specified semi-annual training for all commissioned personnel as well as annual weapons qualifications. This is not sufficient

to conduct safe and effective community law enforcement and I will implement concurrent training as well as provide training opportunities to all personnel. Additionally, I will ensure that all commissioned personnel are provided the opportunity to advance in their individual licenses by attending training for license advancement. Personnel will not only be qualified but proficient in their assigned duty weapon as their life depends on their effective use and employment. Modernization is a key component of Officer Safety and paramount to effective community service. Personnel must have the proper equipment and investigative tools to receive calls for service, respond to critical events, conduct investigations, safely make arrests, and provide a safe correctional environment while those offenders await trial. I will ensure that all personnel have what they need to perform their individual duty by leveraging existing budgets efficiencies, taking advantage of seized criminal tools and equipment, applying for all available State and Federal Grant Programs, and providing well researched funding proposals for approval by our County Commissioners. Finally, I will provide standardizations of all functions within the department and throughout the County. I will work closely with all first responders to ensure the most effective and efficient procedures to handle critical situations from minor accidents to large scale disaster events. This is accomplished initially through Joint Standard Operating Procedures created through face-to-face coordination with all Emergency Management Agencies within the county, followed up with inter agency training, and culminating with larger scale preparedness exercises and after-action reviews to refine those processes and training. Standardization is key to ensure everyone is operating in the same manner consistently, thereby minimizing mistakes that could result in poor execution or injury to our citizens.

3. What do you believe is working well for the Sheriff's Office, and how do you plan to preserve that?

Butts: We have a good group of employees at the Sheriff's Office who are truly invested in their jobs and are dedicated to the service of Bandera County. The dedication of these employees is what makes an organization work well. Our officers know the community and have shown their ability to function at a high level serving the people in a professional manner. I will work to increase the pay for the Sheriff's Office employees to try to keep this group of employees together serving the county.

Dietrich: We do have some good, dedicated people working at the Sheriff's Office. We need to get all the vacant positions filled and we need to get their pay and benefits increased. We also need to increase the level of training and improve their equipment so they can safely and effectively perform their duties.

Teitge: Through multiple conversations with current and former Deputies, Jailers, Dispatchers, and their families, I have had the honor of speaking with some of the most dedicated, hardworking, and compassionate Law Enforcement professionals who are truly the backbone of the organization. They deserve leadership that not only cares for them and their families but fights consistently to improve the quality of their professional and personal lives. I will preserve those amazing individuals through the establishment of a positive professional work environment where everyone has an opportunity to communicate shared ideas and concerns to all levels of leadership. I will foster a "lead from the front" mantra throughout and provide positive mentorship to subordinate leaders and personnel establishing an organization where we love to work and serve the community. I will actively recruit quality candidates for employment commensurate with my organizational leadership intent to bolster an organization of professionalism and service to the community.

4. What are your biggest concerns for the Sheriff's Office?

Butts: Manpower is my biggest concern. The sheriff is not only responsible for the protection of the citizens and visitors of Bandera County and their property, but he is also responsible for the Jail, Dispatch, School Resource Officers, and Court House Security. All these duties cannot happen without the officers, jailers, and dispatchers to perform the functions of the various jobs within the Sheriff's Office. It has become increasingly difficult to find good, qualified applicants for these positions. Hopefully this can be corrected by our plans to increase salaries.

Dietrich: My biggest concern for the Sheriff's Office is the loss of the public's trust that has occurred. The unsolved murders, missing persons, lack of accountability and lack of information has destroyed the relationship with the community. That relationship is vital to public safety. We must have a strong working bond with our citizens to be effective as Peace Officers in our community.

The Sheriff's Office has not grown with the County, I understand that we want to keep things the way they are, but growth is inevitable. I am dedicated to preserving our small town culture and lifestyle, but we must have a Sheriff's Office that is capable of dealing with Big City Crime because it is here now.

I believe the lack of traffic enforcement by the Sheriff's Office has allowed many criminals to go unchecked in our community. A strong traffic enforcement program will not only increase public safety and decrease vehicle crashes but it will allow Deputies to discover many other crimes such as drugs and burglaries.

Teitge: I believe the number one issue that the Department needs to address is the blatant and unfettered drug problem. Drug crime is unbelievably high in some areas of the county. Drug manufacture, delivery, and use is a catalyst for many other forms of criminal activity to include murder, assault, robbery, theft, and burglary. We need to eradicate the criminal drug problem in our County which will reduce other person and property crimes related to the drug enterprise. I will

immediately and aggressively seek out the criminal drug element and destroy their enterprise working effectively with Law Enforcement within Bandera County, adjacent Counties, State Law Enforcement, and Federal Agencies as required to dramatically reduce drug and drug related crime providing safety and security to our citizens.

5. What makes you the best candidate for sheriff?

Butts: I have 41 years of experience as a full-time paid law enforcement officer, much of that time in Bandera County. I have served as your sheriff for the past 11 years. I believe my record clearly demonstrates my leadership abilities, Honesty, and integrity. The record shows that I have the ability and knowledge to serve as your Bandera County Sheriff. Please Re-Elect Daniel R. “Dan” Butts Sheriff in the Republican Primary on March 5.

Dietrich: I have over 30 years of progressively more responsible Full Time Law Enforcement experience in the State of Texas. I have been a patrolman and front-line supervisor in cities with populations from a thousand to almost one hundred thousand. I am a graduate of the International Association of Chiefs of Police West Point Leadership in Police Organizations Program. I served diligently and faithfully as the Bandera City Marshal for nine years. While I was the City Marshal I stayed active, making arrests, traffic stops, investigating cases and being visible at school events. I successfully developed a budget each year, grew the department, increased salaries and training as well as increased the department's community involvement. I am experienced with the big city crime problems we are starting to see in our county and I have a proven record of building relationships and trust in the community that I live in.

During my time as the City Marshal I was awarded the Bandera Chamber of Commerce Wilton Crider Cowboy Preservation Award in 2017 and was nominated for the Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year in 2022.

I currently work as a contractor for I.C.E. Air Operations where I am the BackUp Team Leader on my team. I am responsible for up to 134 detainees, 12 flight officers and 2 nurses on international flights to transfer illegal immigrants back to their home countries.

I also serve on the Flying L Public Utility District Board of Directors. I want to be your Sheriff, I want you to be proud of your Sheriff's Office and proud to call me your Sheriff. I will work night and day to make those things happen.

Thank y'all for all your support, I have never been more humbled than I have been by the people of Bandera County.

Teitge: My decades of Law Enforcement experience allows me to address specific requirements for the county. I have served in Leadership/Administration for multiple Law Enforcement and Military organizations overseeing hundreds of individuals and millions of dollars in budgets. I have proven success in personnel management, budgeting, logistics, fleet maintenance, and organization planning required for the modernization of the department in a rapidly changing county. I have developed a three-tenant program consisting of: Protect the Community, Build the Community, and Protect the Protector that will provide equal proactive law enforcement to every citizen of Bandera County, foster effective transparency and communication with the community, while protecting and preserving our incredible Law Enforcement Professionals who have chosen to provide safety and security through their selfless service. Further, my Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, 24,296 hours of Texas Peace Officer Education, experience, and training arms me with the tools to protect the community, lead the department, and ensure effective enforcement for all.

~ Early voting for the March 5 election begins Tuesday, Feb. 20 and continues through Friday, March 1.

Early voting locations are at the:

Ray Mauer Courthouse Annex, 403 12th Street, Bandera: Tuesday through Friday, Feb. 20-23, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Saturday, Feb. 24: 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Sunday, Feb. 25, 1 - 7 p.m.; Monday through Friday, Feb. 26 to March 1, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Lakehills Area Library, 7200 FM 1283, Lakehills: Tuesday through Friday, Feb. 20-23, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Monday through Friday, Feb. 26 to March 1, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Medina Annex, 161 E. Parker Street, Medina: Tuesday through Friday, Feb. 20-23, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Monday through Friday, Feb. 26 to March 1, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Election Day by precinct is Tuesday, March 5, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Please see more election information at <https://www.banderacounty.org/page/elections.current.elections>