

# Community News



Steven Houston, right, Democratic candidate for the Bourbon County Commission District 3 seat, speaks as Leroy Kruger, left, Republican challenger for the seat, listens during the candidate forum Thursday evening at Fort Scott High School.

## Candidates

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Beth also said he “can be direct in my communication,” which stems from his “passion for bettering

our community.” He said he is working on “being more aware and improving my interactions but my dedication to progress remains strong.”

During opening statements, Houston said his father, Gary Houston,

served for about 12 years as a county commissioner.

“During his time on the commission, he learned a lot, and shared a lot of information with me,” he said.

Houston said his family has lived on a farm in the county since 1957. He is raising the fourth generation in the house and on the farm.

“I’m no different than anyone in this room,” he said. “I’ve got two jobs. My wife is starting her second job. We have three kids and are still struggling to make ends meet. I want the same things you want; a better county. I want something to leave behind to my kids.”

Kruger said he is a life-

long resident of the county, and he has spent most of his life working in public service, including more than 10 years as a deputy with the Bourbon County Sheriff’s Office, a lieutenant at the county jail and courtroom bailiff. He currently works for the Fort Scott codes department. He and his wife, Christina, have been married for more than 30 years, and they have three kids and four grandchildren with “one on the way.”

**Why do you believe it is important to listen and understand others even if their views differ from yours?**

“I think too much in the past, commissioners have been for themselves, and don’t listen to their people,” Kruger said. “I am a public servant. I do not make decisions. Your voice is my command. I serve you. What the public wants is what the public gets.”

Houston shared similar views as Kruger.

“It’s not important to be right. What’s important is to do what’s best for everybody. I don’t care if my views conflict with the residents. What’s important is the resident has a candidate who can listen and convey what they want. Whether I agree or disagree is not relevant.”

**What do you believe are the most important responsibilities you would have to those you represent and why?**

Houston said there are several, but the top priority would be to “listen to constituents.”

“A politician doesn’t do that,” he said. “A politician is up there for an agenda. I don’t have an agenda. Leroy has no agenda.”

Other responsibilities include public works, taxes and “anything that has a dollar beside it on a piece of paper,” Houston said. “That’s our money and we need to make sure it’s spent wisely.”

Kruger said commissioners must listen to the “needs and wants” of the public and act accordingly.

“In all matters that come before Bourbon County, Bourbon County needs to take care of Bourbon County business and not be in business,” Kruger said.

**Would you be in favor of solar farms being taxed as commercial real estate instead of agricultural? After the 10 year tax abatement expires, since those will be industrial sites?**

“I do not believe in eminent domain,” Kruger said. “I do not believe in taking someone’s property away.”

Regarding solar projects,

Kruger said he is not in favor of the proposed locations for solar panels.

“Why don’t they put these on sides of mountains or on buildings, why is it always on farmland? I don’t like it.”

Houston said if solar panels were installed next door to his house, “I would probably sell out and leave the area completely.”

“I don’t believe in infringing on landowners’ rights,” he said. “As far as taxation, I don’t know why they’re building them here. Why Fort Scott? There are plenty of other places in Kansas. After the 10-year abatement, they should be taxed above that level.”

In closing, Kruger said he wants to better Bourbon County and he would serve with “transparency, trust and honesty.”

“I will serve you, the people of this county, and not myself,” he said.

Houston said he wants to better the county for future generations, and he intends to bring back “a certain level of professionalism.”

“I also intend to listen to people of the district and convey what they want as a majority, not what I want. That’s what they’ll get out of me.”

Houston also said county funds are the lowest “they’ve ever been, because of excessive spending.”

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Holt earns degree at Barton Community College

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Barton Community College has announced its list of graduates who earned associate degrees or certificates for career training during the spring semester of 2024.

Claire Holt of Fort Scott received an Associate of Science degree.

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