

1. Data continues to show that hunger remains a significant issue within our community. While immediate relief programs are crucial, addressing the upstream causes of hunger is essential for long-term solutions. How do you plan to tackle the root causes of hunger, such as poverty and racism?

One of my prime initiatives, if elected, will be to **end the regressive 3.53% city sales tax on food**. As one of a group that tried to get this put on the ballot in 2018, I believe that the city is literally taking food out of people's mouths. My estimate is that a family of four would spend \$800 a month, \$200 a week on food consumed at home. If you round up to \$10,000 a year the tax of 3.53% is \$353.

The \$353 in the pocket of the food purchaser will be spent immediately in the local economy. It is a sum equivalent to a month's utility bill or enough to buy clothes and shoes (fully taxed) or even furniture, cleaning supplies, hardware store purchases (fully taxed). The revenue the city contends is "lost" in fact is not "lost" it is simply revenue that will come from other non food purchases. The bottom line is that if a lower income family had an extra \$353 in their pocket, they would be able to buy more food.

The regressive nature of the tax on food you consume at home cannot be overlooked. In fact, as food becomes more expensive, the city collects more taxes. The dozen eggs, milk and bread that was \$10 a year ago, taxes 35 cents has increased in cost to \$15. with the tax collected is 43 cents. As a percentage of income, the person making \$50,000 a year is far more impacted by the cost of food and the increased taxes than the person making \$100,000 a year.

### **Fighting poverty**

In my previous time on city council, 2007-2025, I led the creation of the city's first anti-poverty program called RISE. Beginning in 2010, this program helped support families to grow themselves out of poverty. The program was modeled both on the Boulder County Circles Out of Poverty program and ground breaking programs from Portland Oregon and research by the Brookings Institute. The RISE families actually grew themselves out of poverty. This program had five years of dedicated funding in the city budget. It was the first time the city had good data on how much it cost families to live in Longmont. The city collected data on cost and availability of childcare, housing,

transportation and income needed to be self-sufficient for single parent and dual parent families with children. The program was successful and an academic paper written by a Metropolitan State sociology professor extolled the merits of the program.

If elected. **I will initiate a new program based on the RISE program.** The economic environment has changed so much that a new anti-poverty program will have new elements to it.

**Fighting racism** is important not just for food access but for our local society. Employers regularly practice wage theft on their employees, the young and our immigrant community. In my seventeen years serving on the El Comite de Longmont board, eight as the city council liaison and nine years as a community member, the last five as board secretary, I supported and raised funds to fight racism, discrimination and wage theft against our Latino and immigrant community members. El Comite's other programs such as assisting with Naturalization paperwork, Know your Rights and adult English classes support our immigrant community members' success. I recently termed off the board of El Comite, however, I continue to donate and serve on the Nomination committee.

I have served eighteen years on the Longmont Multicultural Action Committee which funds, supports and is an ally to our diverse cultural communities. The LMAC funds celebrations such as MLK day, Juneteenth, Asian Lunar New Year festival, Cinco de Mayo, Day of the Dead, Nepali Jatra festival, the Nepali festival, Peruvian festival and also Black History month. I have volunteered many hours with and learned much from this group of culturally diverse and dedicated individuals.

**Fighting racism and discrimination is not a one time event for me.** I work with many people behind the scenes to be sure we do not allow racism to grow in our community. I will continue to fight racism and poverty every way I can by continuing to work with non profits and groups that are doing this work. I will speak out and call out racism when I see it in our city.

2. What role should the local government have in ensuring that our community has consistent access to nutritious and culturally desired foods and a robust local food system?

Sarah Levison Candidate for Mayor of Longmont

Local governments can support programs such as SNAP credits at the farmer's market. When I was on council previously, we voted to fund Farmer's market credits for SNAP recipients. Through the federal Community Development Block Grant program, CDGB, the city and the council can direct funds to help support culturally diverse food businesses, both brick and mortar and those who have a cottage food production license (in home business).

If elected Mayor, I will work to find **ways the city can support local culturally food businesses.** The city can also purchase locally grown foods and help local producers get recognition for products they grow.

3. The rise of urban agriculture and the demand for local foods has led to greater interactions between producers and city regulations around zoning, permits and city/county policies. These interactions have sometimes been constructive and clarifying, and other times adversarial. How would you work with food producers, entrepreneurs and city agencies to ensure that the right policies are enacted that support a vibrant local food system?

I would first start by reviewing what has been constructive and what has been an impediment. As is my method, **I will seek out conversations with all stakeholders and listen to their concerns and stories of successes.** Having a robust system of local food producers is crucial for the city's residents food safety and food security. I have always worked collaboratively with both city staff, businesses, city agencies, non-profits and residents.

**How would I work to ensure the right policies are enacted?**

Does the city have a working group that convenes all interested parties? If not, **I will initiate a working group so that we can avoid crafting city policy without stakeholders input.** It has been the city's practice to convene ad hoc advisory stakeholder groups to review, study and suggest policy before any of the city staff craft policy and advisory committees such as Planning and Zoning review and move policy to the city council for a vote.

Sarah Levison, Candidate for Mayor of Longmont