



**It's About Time. . . 385.1087**  
.. *for a Change!*  
.. *for an Independent Commissioner!*  
.. *for a More Affordable Jefferson County!*

**Sandy Hershelman**  
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*Posted on ElectSandyHershelman.com*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Don't whitewash it: Housing emergency exists**

Sandy Hershelman is running for the District 2 Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners' seat. Her comments below are made as an individual, and not representing the Housing Action Plan Network (HAPN) on which she sits.

In the May 7, 2008 *Port Townsend & Jefferson County Leader*, Allison Arthur wrote of the deliberations surrounding the declaration of a housing emergency in Jefferson County,

“County Commissioner David Sullivan said he approaches the issue from the perspective of a nurse, and he questioned whether the lack of affordable housing was an emergency or a ‘chronic condition.’ ‘I really look at the housing situation as a chronic problem. It’s been going on for years,’ Sullivan said. Sullivan said it seems to him that the city and county should lobby the state for more tools to solve the problem. He questioned whether declaring an emergency would be sufficient.

### **Hershelman responded:**

There is a housing emergency in Jefferson County. To think otherwise is irresponsible. I was appalled by my opponent's comments. We sat side-by-side through months and months of affordable housing meetings. The BoCC adopted the Housing Action Plan, with its mountain of data, in October 2006. He should be well aware of the need, even if he never talked to a single young family struggling to keep a roof over their heads.

Not long after my opponent pulled me aside and attempted to “educate me” on how it would be inadvisable to counter his comments during public meetings where he was on the job, he throws this bomb at the efforts of HAPN to help myriad nonprofits seek funding for affordable housing.

I was asked, on behalf of the group, to sign HAPN's letter to senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell urging them to support desperately needed federal funding of affordable housing by co-sponsoring the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act of 2007 (S2523) —and I eagerly did so.

As executive officer of the Jefferson County Home Builders Association, it is my goal to promote affordable housing, not just for those hard-working folks barely making the rent, but also for the working

class and seniors struggling to get into, or keep, a home. How many of you, or your neighbors, have the \$80,000 a year income to buy a median priced home in this county?

“As a nurse,” my opponent should know that people die every day from chronic conditions. As a commissioner, he should know well the conditions in which many of his constituents live.

It’s frustrating to work with data from the last census, but we have what we have. In 2000, there were about 3,000 people living below poverty level in Jefferson County; 23 percent of all households were deemed “low income.”

Here’s the statistic that hit me hard: Nearly 40 percent of Jefferson County’s single moms with kids are living in poverty. (Port Ludlow and Marrowstone skew the statistics with zero percent.) Port Townsend and Port Hadlock are both just above 42 percent. That number goes to 80 percent in Quilcene. *80 percent...*

The topic of affordable housing is dear to my heart. Ten years ago I was one of those women. I was a newly divorced single mom with two kids. I had worked from home to be with the kids; put my career on idle. Unlike most of the faceless women in these statistics, I was blessed with a \$300 house payment. I watched other single moms around me spiral downward—or hook up with guys they shouldn’t just to feed their kids.

Of course, just declaring a housing emergency is not sufficient. By all means, “the city and county should lobby the state for more tools to solve the problem.” Haven’t they been doing that all along? If not, shame on them!