

Ross seeks diverse mix of housing, managed growth

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

Gary Ross believes that the concern about growth in Sisters is a legitimate one. He also acknowledges that, due to a lack of affordable housing, service workers in Sisters, of necessity, often have to drive from Bend, Redmond and beyond to work here.

He suggests that as Sisters grows, there isn't so much a need for more monolithic neighborhoods, but rather a diverse mix of housing, with a variety of price points, so workers can afford to live in Sisters.

Ross reported he was asked to run for Sisters City Council by a number of Sisters residents after he wrote a Letter to the Editor in *The Nugget* about safety concerns surrounding event traffic around Creekside Park. He also has some creative ideas for minimizing conflicts between automobile traffic and bicyclists along Washington and Jefferson Avenues.

His education at University of South Maine led to a professional-technical bachelor's degree. A Master of Education in Media from Utah State provided the foundation for his years of work as the Professional-Technical Coordinator for the Springfield Oregon School District. Under Ross' guidance, the Springfield district had the first 3D printer west of the Mississippi, while he served as the president of the Northwest Technology Association.

Ross also held positions of Media Director and

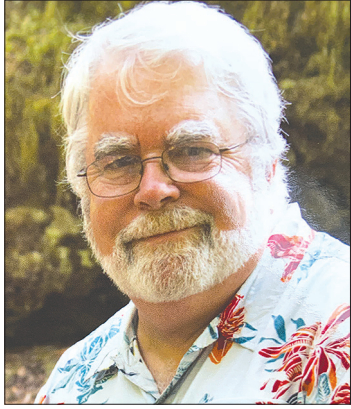


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Facilities Director with the Lane Education Service District. When district budget cuts became necessary, Ross eliminated his position and contracted back to the district so his four employees could keep their positions. Following some surgery, he decided to take early retirement and move east of the mountains.

Ross and wife, Judy, purchased their home in Sisters in 2016 and moved over from the valley in the spring of 2017. He left behind an extensive public service career including his eight years of serving as an elected director of the WillamaLane Park and Recreation District. Once here he became involved in Sisters as a member of the City Parks Advisory Board, a member of the SOAR Foundation Board, and on the City Budget Committee.

Ross says he understands how to be an elected official and has extensive experience with public budgeting, long-range planning, system development charges review, bonds, and expansion of facilities. He has experience with the Trust for Public Lands and has lobbied in Washington,

D.C. Ross considers himself an ethical person who is above reproach.

When asked if there is any decision made by the current Council that he would have voted differently upon, he referred to allowing Phase 4 of the ClearPine development to move forward when, in his estimation, the developer had not fully met the conditions he agreed to in 2007 regarding 10 affordable housing units.

"The partners have profited well from the higher-end homes they have constructed and should be required to meet all obligations fully. With 13 years to meet this obligation, I believe all affordable units should have been family units on their own lots... To me the original agreement was clear and should be honored."

(Six multi-family units are being built by Habitat for

Humanity and two others are a single rental property with an accessory dwelling unit.)

Ross grew up in a small rural tourist town in the northeast corner of Maine, across the river from Canada, where people came to fish. He likened it to Sisters and said he knows what it's like to live in a tourist town.

His hopes for Sisters

include managing growth in a way that doesn't harm the city, tying the City's annual goals to the goals and values identified in the Sisters Vision Plan.

"Whatever happens with long-range planning," he said, "I want to maintain the quality of life, while respecting Sisters' long history and embracing new people."

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