

County races

South Eugene commissioner

Image an issue in the Nathan, Rust contest

By Paul Ertelt
Of the Emerald

Images often supersede issues in political races, but image is the issue in Lane County, says one candidate for the south Eugene position on the Lane County Board of Commissioners.

Tonie Nathan, who is challenging incumbent Jerry Rust in the nonpartisan race, says Rust is perceived as an opponent of business and economic growth and that image has made new businesses reluctant to locate in Lane County.

Rust denies that he is anti-business, pointing to the fact that he founded his own tree planting company. As commissioner, he says he has worked closely with businesses to develop jobs for the county.

Rust also maintains that business location decisions are complex and are not based on the perceived attitude of one commissioner.

Rust has served as a commissioner for eight years. Nathan a former journalist, has done community relations work for the county.

The board, which includes five commissioners, is the

county's legislative and administrative body. As an arm of the state government, it supervises the county's courts, jail, elections department and social services. The board also oversees a budget in excess of \$100 million and is responsible for county-wide planning and setting the boundaries of urban growth.

Nathan blames Rust for many of the county's economic woes, which have caused an exodus from the county. Nathan cites a study by Dunn & Bradstreet showing Lane County to be the ninth fastest shrinking county in the country.

"We need people to come here and help pay taxes," Nathan says.

But Rust blames the economic downturn on high interest rates, which have hurt the housing market and have caused the decline in the demand for timber.

"The county is wracked by economic forces not of our making," he says.

Rust says his accomplishments on the board include reducing county staff by one-half and helping to develop a job training program that he says has served 400 businesses

and retrained 1,600 workers.

Nathan traces Rust's anti-development image to his mid-1970s lawsuit against Data General Corp., a high-tech firm that had planned to build a plant in Eugene. When the firm decided to locate in North Carolina instead, the county lost about 7,500 jobs, Nathan says.

Rust calls the Data General lawsuit ancient history and says its purpose was not to block the plant, but to establish urban

growth boundaries. Two land use plans that have been developed since he took office "ended the land use wars in the county."

Nathan also criticizes Rust's opposition to plans for a resort at Big Creek, on the Oregon coast. She says the resort would help give the county the economic diversity it needs.

Rust says that Big Creek is one of the last wild streams on the coast and the project will do irrevocable environmental

damage, disrupting spawning grounds for steelhead, cutthroat trout and coho salmon.

"You can't move an estuary or a stream, but you can move a destination point resort," he says.

Nathan believes the county must loosen its land use planning rules and speed up the process of granting building permits. "People should be allowed to do what they want on their own land," she says.

North Eugene commissioner

Ball, Weinstein provide a colorful match

The race for the north-Eugene position on the Lane County Board of Commissioners provides a contest between Eugene City Councilman John Ball and former-commissioner Archie Weinstein.

The winner will replace retiring Commissioner Scott Lieuaellen.

The outspoken Weinstein has promised to trim the cost of county government by over \$2.5 million through the reduction of 36 positions in Lane County government. He also promises to reduce spending through realignment of county worker salaries and the elimination of waste in county government.

Ball charges that his opponent has not

been totally open about his plan for budget reductions.

Although opposed to Ballot Measure 2, the 1.5 percent property tax limitation, Ball believes that the current property tax system must be readjusted. Measure 2 would devastate the education system, Ball says.

Weinstein has not taken a stand on the measure during the campaign, claiming that businessmen should vote their pocketbooks.

"I want to be a Lane County commissioner, and I'm only concerned with issues affecting Lane County. I will not discuss the ballot measures; I will not go to Cuba to meet with Castro, and I won't go to China," Weinstein says, alluding to Commissioner Jerry Rust's spring trip to China.

Sheriff

Patrol shortage, tight budget face winner

In the race for Lane County sheriff, the questions of patrol manpower and jail overcrowding have dominated discussion between incumbent Dave Burks and his challenger Dave Salyers.

Burks is seeking a fourth term as Lane County's chief law enforcer. Over the past four years, the sheriff's office has been plagued by budget cuts, resulting in reduced patrols in the county, particularly in the outlying areas.

Overcrowding at the Lane County Jail is another issue that Salyers has seized upon since he and Burks emerged as the top vote winners in the five-candidate primary race in May.

Salyers, a former sheriff's deputy who currently works as a special investigator for the Lane County district attorney's office, proposes opening a large-scale restitution and work release center to ease jail overcrowding. The idea was called "poppycock" by Burks at a news conference in October.

The Jail Overcrowding Task Force will release its recommendations in December, and Burks wants to wait until then to make any decision.

Salyers is critical of Burks' staff make-up, claiming that there are too many supervisors on its roster. He also blames Burks for a lawsuit, now in appeal, that seeks to force the county Board of Commissioners to provide enough money to run the jail and to serve the law enforcement needs of rural areas.

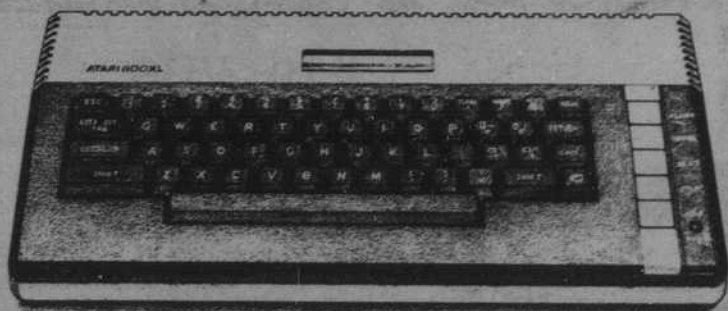
By cutting two captain positions in the sheriff's administration, reducing the number of lieutenants and sergeants, and reorganizing the jail staff, Salyers says he can restore 24-hour rural patrols within two months of taking office.

Burks defends his administrative organization, maintaining that it compares favorably to similar-sized sheriff's offices in other areas. He says he will try to restore the patrol services as the budget allows.

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