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COMMUNITY

Ward 3 candidates tout their experience

By Hope Neelson
Emerald Reporter

All four candidates running for the Ward 3 Eugene City Council seat say experience is what distinguishes them from each other.

Candidate Eben Dobson said his 30 years of civic experience coupled with practicing conservation provided him with unique experience.

Living on his farm near Grants Pass, tending his organic gardens and fighting the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service gave him a strong sense of conservatism, Dobson said.

Emile Mortier said 35 years of experience working for city government gives him a real edge about how the system works and how it can be changed.

Mortier said the emphasis should be on providing essential city services, such as police, fire, public works, education and park and recreation.

Even the youngest candidate, former University student Bob Steringer — who hasn't been alive for 35 years — said experience was his asset in this race.

Steringer, 22, worked as a legislative assistant in 1989 and was a facilitator of Eugene Decisions in November. He is also a member of the West University Neighborhood Association.

"I'm the only candidate in the race with a record of state and local political experience," Steringer said.

The fourth candidate, Kevin Hornbuckle, said he was the only candidate with any history of activism in Eugene.

"I'm running because somebody has to stand up for peace and social justice," Hornbuckle said.

Hornbuckle said that as a councilman he would stand up for students' rights, especially regarding high rent rates.

"Landlords gouge students and other people of poor or moderate income for rent," he said. "The city could encourage

the board of realtors to lower rent."

Dobson said besides maintaining respect for students as contributing community members, Measure 5 was his biggest concern.

"I don't care what it's going to take," Dobson said. "If we don't compensate for Measure 5, we will lose our better professors and start losing our students."

When asked about his contribution to students, Mortier also mentioned Measure 5.

"Education is one of the most important things," Mortier said. "The state is using education as a whipping board for Measure 5."

Mortier also said the environment for students could be improved through more community jobs and more city programs that would strengthen their orientation to the community.

Steringer said that because he attended the University up until last term and has been connected to the University, he would address student issues such as parking, housing and more public safety.

Steringer also was a facilitator of Eugene Decisions in November, but said he was not happy about the process. Steringer criticized the City Council for not participating more in the process.

"The people involved in the workshop got the benefit of education about the budgeting process," he said. "But the information that gets back to the City Councilors is basically number crunches and statistics."

The other candidates agreed on the mismanagement of the Eugene Decisions process.

On the issue of revitalizing downtown, Mortier called the opening of Olive Street "another example of the Council not feeling they're elected."

Mortier said the city should be the responder, not the initiator in the development of downtown. He said the property owners and merchants should concentrate

on the problem of revitalizing the area.

Steringer said he doesn't favor opening Olive Street unless it is part of a comprehensive plan.

"I don't think a street opening is going to revitalize the area itself," Steringer said. "It will increase a few peoples' property values without addressing the problem of the business climate."

Steringer called for free parking, moving the LTD transfer station and covering it during the winter to make the area more hospitable.

Dobson said he favors a long range plan of phasing out city-occupied and owned space and programs like urban renewal, and letting entrepreneurs into those city offices.

"Let free enterprise go on a positive note and see what happens," Dobson said.

Dobson said he also favored the opening of Olive Street, and building the library near downtown at the Sears site.

Calling himself a conservationist, Dobson said it is vital to protect the delicate balance of the environment in and around Eugene, such as the wetlands.

Dobson also emphasized the importance of keeping a balance between protecting the environment and maintaining jobs.

On the issue of the Hult Center's constant budget deficit on the city, Dobson said he would favor inviting businesses on a gradual basis to create endowments for the center's funding.

Mortier said the Hult Center could be maintained efficiently through more economic solutions, such as more community involvement and volunteers.

Steringer said he would prioritize a goal of eliminating \$1 million of the Hult Center's cost to Eugene and look elsewhere for revenue to support the center.

Hornbuckle said the poor should have better access to the entertainment, so Hult Center tickets should be made more affordable through trimming the budget.

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