

Stayton, Detroit voters have tough choices

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Salem Statesman Journal
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The path to accomplish one local measure is much more difficult than the other.

Stayton and Detroit voters are being asked to pass local measures in the May 19 primary election, an increase in property tax in Stayton and residency requirements for city councilors in Detroit.

Stayton operations levy

In the past two decades, voters in Stayton have passed six levies to help fund the operations at Stayton Public Library, Stayton Family Memorial Pool and in local parks.

The voters are being asked to pass an increase in the tax rate to 70 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value on homes in the city and extend the levy another five

years. But the Stayton library and pool are currently closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Though city parks are open, the playground equipment in them are closed.

“The unfortunate thing for us, this is a levy that needs to be renewed every four years and this time we’re asking for five just to make it a little longer,” Stayton City Manager Keith Campbell said. “We’re dealing with unfortunate timing of it coming with COVID-19.”

Like all Oregon cities, Stayton’s tax rate is capped by Measure 5 and Measure 50.

Stayton first passed a option levy to support the library, pool and parks in 1998 and since then, additional levies have been passed in 2002, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016 to extend the funding.

The assessed rate on homes in Stayton currently is 60 cents per \$1,000. “This really is a supplemental sup-

port,” Campbell said.

The increase to 70 cents per \$1,000 would fund deferred maintenance at Stayton Family Memorial Pool.

The levy would raise approximately \$425,000 the first year and increase to \$479,000 in the 2025-2026 fiscal year and bring in a total of \$2.26 million.

The median assessed value for homes in Stayton is \$178,395. If the levy passes, the average homeowner would see an increase of about \$10 per month.

“Basically the increase is the idea, one, we want a little more to go to parks,” Campbell said. “Our library is in pretty good shape maintenance wise, our pool is not. The maintenance is required for pools. We’ve been working a lot on the library, new roof, gutters, dry rot.”

Approximately 45% of the funding would go to maintain operations of the library, 45% would go toward the pool and 10% would go to maintenance of parks.

If this levy fails, the city would have to make major cuts.

“Internally what I’ll say is we have concerns of whether the library and the pool could still function or function at just basic levels,” Campbell said.

Detroit residency requirements

Many homeowners in Detroit don’t live there year-round.

The city’s voters are being asked to amend the city charter to loosen residency requirements for city councilors.

Currently, five of the seven city councilors must live in the city over six months each year in the vacation hot spot. If the measure passes, four of the seven city councilors will be required to live in the city over six months out of the year.

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Farmer

Continued from Page 1A

the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Case and the EPA reached a settlement where he would pay \$100,000, remove the rock wall and another 70-year-old dike on the farm that predates his ownership of the land and restore the banks of the North Santiam River with native vegetation.

Though he signed the pact with the government, Case said he plans to keep fighting, even if the fight costs him hundreds of thousands of dollars.

“I wake up every night thinking about this crap,” Case said.

EPA spokesperson Mark MacIntyre said the EPA and U.S. Department of Justice, which prosecuted the case, are limited in what they can say about it until it is approved by a federal judge.

Convergence of Santiam River prone to flooding

The area in south Marion and north Linn Counties where the North and South Santiam rivers converge before feeding into the Willamette River frequently floods.

Many roads in the area are so frequently inundated they have permanent swinging gates as they so frequently require being blocked off.

The North Santiam River has been designated critical habitat for Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and steelhead under the Endangered Species Act and essential habitat for Coho salmon and is protected.

Case purchased farm land on the banks of the North Santiam River in 1994.

Beyond the 400-acre farm near Jefferson, Case owns about 1,200 acres in the area and farms about 2,000 acres including other land he rents.

Bill Case Farms employs about 90 people in the peak of harvest season.

His fertile land has produced grass seed, squash, pumpkins and beans over the years, but Case said he now he mainly farms sweet corn.

If you’ve purchased fresh corn at a Safeway, Fred Meyer or WinCo in the past few years, it may have been grown at Case’s farm.

And Case regularly donates excess crops to local food banks.

Last year was the first time his corn was served at the annual Aumsville



Farmer Bill Case drives along the road the EPA is requesting he remove on his property, in Albany on April 21, 2020. MADELEINE COOK / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Corn Festival, and it was more popular than anyone expected.

“They called me and said the people over there are going crazy about it,” Case said.

Building the dike

When the flood of 1996 hit, Case learned how vulnerable his new farm was to flooding.

He said one dike that was on the land since the 1950s was washed out in the flood and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rebuilt it with dirt and rocks he gave them.

Another flood in 2004 created a channel through the land and connected the North Santiam River with the South Santiam River, washed out a portion of the bank on the North Santiam River and many trees and native plants washed away.

After the flood of 2008, Case decided he needed to do something to protect the farm from the inevitable waters.

He said he consulted with staff from the Corps of Engineers and the Department of State Lands about solutions, and what they came up with was building a rock wall on his property away from the river to serve as a dike in times of high water.

He said he was told it was a gray area as the work would take place on his property and away from the body of water.

Case, however, didn’t get anything in writing from those consultations and never applied for Clean Water Act permits from the EPA for the work.

Based on his conversations, he spent about \$100,000 to construct an 800-

foot-long, 15-foot high wall of rock to serve as a dike to protect his farm fields against floods in 2009.

It worked as intended.

Case said in the flooding of 2019, the river never crested over into the fields.

“If we took out them dikes, it could wash that whole damn field eventually,” he said. “It would just keep washing. The North Santiam would wash right over into the South Santiam River.”

The fight against the EPA

Since the wall went up, however, Case has been locked in a fight with the EPA.

The EPA has contended Case’s construction of the rock wall was a violation of the Clean Water Act, which prohibits discharging of pollutants into navigable waters including the banks of water bodies up to the high-water mark.

Portions of Case’s farm are at or below the high-water mark.

According to court documents, the Corps of Engineers sent him a cease and desist order in 2010, stating the discharge of material below the high-water mark was a violation of the Clean Water Act.

The EPA alleged Case filled in a wetland approximately 823 feet long in 2012 and filled another wetland with gravel in 2013.

The EPA says he contoured the river bank by dredging an 835-foot-long trench, deposited native materials into the trench to create an armored bank and in so doing dumped approximately 4,039 cubic yards of material into the river.

Case says that dike had been built in

1950, long before he purchased the property in 1994.

“They want me to remove that, too, and let all that water flood my field,” Case said.

The EPA also says the construction of the 1000-foot rock wall blocked five side channels of the North Santiam River and deposited another 16,772 yards of material below the regular high-water mark of the river.

“I didn’t discharge any dirt into the river,” Case said. “When the 2008 flood changed channels and it went through my field, it washed some dirt down into the field, but I don’t know how much.”

A settlement, but not the end

After years of fighting in district court, Case and the EPA arrived at a settlement a few weeks ago.

In a release announcing the settlement, the EPA says the agreement includes complete restoration of the sites of both dikes and revegetation of the areas, reconnecting the downstream end of the river by a new channel formed in a flood and discontinuing use and replanting an area designated as sloughs and wetlands.

He also is to purchase an adjacent parcel of land and plant it with native species.

“I’m keeping fighting because I had to sign that thing,” Case said. “I had to go to Portland to court for two days. The only way I could get out of that damn meeting was to agree. They wanted \$450,000 to start with.”

Case fears if he removes the dikes, a grove of about 50 large trees will be washed into the river at a popular spot where people float along the North Santiam River each summer.

Case said he has already spent \$300,000 fighting the case.

He said the EPA wants him to move the dikes 18 feet farther from the river, which he estimates will cost another \$100,000.

“I’m going to have \$680,000 in this when this is done,” he said. “And it’s all because the river changed channel in 2008.”

MacIntyre said the EPA will accept public comments about the proposed settlement that runs through May 18 before a federal judge approves it.

Comments about the proposed settlement can be sent to Kent E. Hanson of the Department of Justice at PO Box 7611, Washington, D.C., 20044.

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Primary

Continued from Page 1A

searching cures for cancer, that could be working on green energy solutions, but they’re flipping burgers because they have to pay their rent,” Reynolds said.

“There’s 330 million people in America. Imagine all that mind power going into outer space. But instead they show up to a software company that they have to encrypt. We need to start thinking on a species level at some point. What are we doing as humanity?”

Kurt Schrader

Though the district of over 700,000 has a wide base of Republicans, Democrats have held the seat since 1997, first Darlene Hooley until 2009 and Schrader since.

A member of the blue-dog caucus of moderates in Congress, Schrader is largely viewed as a moderate Democrat, which he says lets him better represent the district’s constituents.

“I’ve had other folks ask me, ‘Geez, Oregon’s such a blue state, how can you do this?’ Oregon is not very blue. Portland is blue. Eugene is very blue. Ashland is very blue. My district is not,” Schrader said.

“If I can make sure I represent all those people, I think I can do a very good job. I’ve actually got to tailor my re-



Gamba **Reynolds** **Schrader**

sponses to the district and based on what is best for hearing from the folks. I know I’ve been one of the most effective leaders there.”

Schrader said he has been impressed with how fast Congress acted to pass the CARES Act to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

But he said the situation has made it clear that everyone needs access to universal health care.

Schrader said he wants to improve access to career and technical education to better support the trades. He said when some people come out of the pandemic they will be looking at educational options for the next few years.

He said climate change is an important part of his goals for another term. He intends to do that by making sure the energy source, be it solar or coal, is at or near zero emissions.

“I think it’s really important to get after the climate change piece,” Schrader said.

Contact the reporter at *bpoehler@StatesmanJournal.com* or *Twitter.com/bpoehler*

5th District primary

Mark Gamba

Party: Democrat.

Age: 61.

Home: Milwaukie.

Family: Partner Kendra, son Forrest, daughters Makena and Summer.

Education: Associate of Applied Science, Photography, Colorado Mountain College.

Work: Photojournalist for clients like National Geographic, Adidas, Nike, and Carhartt.

Public service: Wilsonville mayor since 2015, on the Wilsonville city council since 2012.

Campaign cash on hand: \$17,956 as of April 23.

Campaign contact: Jaime Mathis, communications director, *jaime@mark-gamba.com*

Blair Reynolds

Party: Democrat.

Age: 40.

Home: Portland.

Family: Wife Sara, three children.

Education: Associate Degree in Liberal Arts from San Jose Junior College.

Work: Intern in news department at Stanford University, quality assurance for video game companies, six years in National Guard, bartender and owner of Hale Pele and BG Reynolds line of cocktail syrups.

Public service: None.

Campaign cash on hand: \$2,279 as of April 23.

Campaign contact: *blair@reynoldsfor.us*

Kurt Schrader

Party: Democrat.

Age: 68.

Home: Canby.

Family: Wife Susan, and eight children.

Education: Bachelor’s degree from Cornell University in 1973; bachelor’s degree from University of Illinois 1975; doctor of veterinary medicine in 1977 from University of Illinois.

Work: Veterinarian, small businessman, farmer.

Public service: 5th District seat since 2009; Oregon Senate, 2003-09; Oregon House, 1997-2003; Canby Planning Commission, 1981-96.

Campaign cash on hand: \$3,092,590 as of April 23.

Campaign contact: (503) 723-6174 or *campaign@kurtschrader.com*