

JUDGES

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it, and that's our drug treatment program," Wes said. "If it's a first-time offense, and not involved in violence, then you can enroll in the drug treatment program. If you comply with drug treatment court, then we can help you become clean and sober and start a life of sobriety. It works in other countries, it works here, it works in other states. It's not soft on crime. It's smart and it saves taxpayer dollars."

Wes also said the circuit court juvenile justice system needs to be improved by listening to parents and adopting activity-based sentencing, which includes community service and other activities.

An audience member then asked the judicial candidates about what type of experience a judge must have to perform his or her duties on the bench.

Both answered that a judge needs a wide breadth of knowledge. Mona responded with an example of her typical day as current circuit court judge.

"For instance, today I started

out (presiding over) some pre-trial conferences in civil cases," Mona said. "Then I moved onto a juvenile detention hearing. Then I moved onto a preliminary hearing in a criminal case. Then I did custodials in criminal cases for people who were being arraigned. I did a couple pleas and sentencings, and then this afternoon I did a jurisdictional hearing for a child dependency case. So in any given day, I go from one thing to the next."

Mona noted she does have a broad background, having spent 17 years as a civil lawyer and 11-1/2 years as a prosecutor.

Wes agreed with Mona, and brought up his own experience as a lawyer.

"I agree you have to have very broad experience," Wes said. "My experience has been trying literally hundreds of cases in civil and criminal court. I have represented people in these counties charged with everything from assault (in the fourth degree) to murder. I've represented ranchers and farmers in adverse possession cases, and I've represented clients in every one of those types of hearings that Mona just mentioned."

Wes also said he's licensed to practice in state and federal court, and has argued before the Oregon Supreme Court.

Another audience member asked if having experience as a prosecutor was an important part of being a judge. Wes answered that he thought it was necessary.

"I have prosecuted literally hundred civil cases in both state court and federal court, representing people," Wes said. "I'm not a government lawyer by choice. I'm a people's lawyer. I don't represent corporations. I represent people against corporations."

Mona said she didn't think it was necessary to be a prosecutor, but it is helpful.

"I think the question is aimed at being a criminal prosecutor, and as a criminal prosecutor you learn to analyze cases based upon the rights not only of one person, but on the rights of the defendants, on the rights of the victims and on the public safety aspect of that," she said.

If you were unable to attend the forum, the full answers given by Mona and Wes, as well as all of the candidates, can be found at the La Grande Alive.Tv Facebook page.

Cove mayoral candidate Del Little addresses constituents at candidates forum

By Max Denning

The Observer

The Union County Candidates Forum included discussion from Del Little, a write-in candidate for Cove mayor. His write-in opponent, incumbent Lyndon Rose, could not attend the forum due to a prior engagement.

Little, a former Island City City Councilor and write-in candidate for Cove mayor, presented on what he believes are the two most pressing issues in Cove: public involvement and enforcement of laws.

Little said council meetings aren't well attended, unless a controversial issue is on the docket.

"Citizen input allows the council to make better decisions," Little said. "I would create a way to inform the citizens (about) meetings, events, topics of interest ... I would create what I call 'The Mayor's Corner Bulletin' and I would produce it and it would be posted places where the public frequents."

Little said he wants to set more goals based on citizen input.

"I want to hear from the people of Cove if I am elected mayor," Little said.

In terms of enforcement of laws, Little said he would like to set up a municipal court in Cove to deal with fines that are assessed.

The forum then turned to the audience for questions for Little and the other mayoral candidates from around Union County. The first question was about how the candidates felt about the current state of economic development in their respective towns and how they would improve it.

"Economic development for Cove is limited to the existing businesses there for the most part," Little said. "We want to retain those businesses, and we're willing to work with other agencies in economic development that would not only benefit Cove, but Union County as a whole."

The next audience question was about public involvement, and how the candidates would engage those who live outside city limits.

"I think I've already started a step toward that communication element by handing out to many citizens in Cove my sheet that gives my experience and willingness to be open and available," he said. "I'm a good listener, and there's a lot of experience I have that can help the community. I recognize we have a tremendous amount of citizens living outside our city limits. We're open for discussions. Like I said, we need more input for the council meeting."

Lastly, the candidates were asked about the mayor's tasks on city council.

"They keep order, especially on those touchy items," Little said. "Our charter states the mayor also appoints the city recorder and other positions. The charter doesn't go too far beyond those duties other than what's already been addressed."

Elgin mayoral candidates take the stage at forum

By Audrey Love

The Observer

The Union County Candidates Forum saw a host of contenders — and opinions — concerning this November's city government elections, but perhaps none more curious than between Elgin's mayoral candidates — incumbent Allan Duffy and his challenger, Jon Rutherford.

The candidates took the stage alongside fellow mayoral candidates Del Little, of Cove, and Robb Rea, of Island City, for a three-minute talking segment per candidate, followed by a question and answer portion. Each candidate was given the opportunity to introduce themselves and discuss their platform before a live audience at the Blue Mountain Conference Center in La Grande and a live-stream available through La Grande Alive's Facebook page.

Duffy and Rutherford were the only candidates present from Elgin. Duffy has lived in Elgin for 11 years and served as its mayor the last four years. This is the first time since his initial election against his predecessor, John Stover, that he will face opposition.

"I just have a passion for Elgin," Duffy said at Monday night's forum. "I want to continue the good work the city employees and citizens of Elgin have done to improve their community."

Duffy spoke of two main issues he would concentrate on if re-elected, largely concerning the preservation of the city's home rule charter.

"Most small cities have a home rule charter. As the state works their mandates upon it, they're eating into our charters and mandat-

ing us to spend funds where we think funds don't really need to be spent," he said.

In Oregon, home rule typically applies to counties. A 1958 amendment to the Oregon Constitution reserved to the voters of Oregon counties the right to adopt charters prescribing how their county governments should be organized, what powers they should have, and what procedure they should follow in administering county affairs, according to the Association of Oregon Counties.

In conjunction with the charter, Duffy said he also wants to "continue to provide great public safety and public services." The city has maintained a contract with the Union County Sheriff's Office since the dissolution of its police department in 2012 — with three deputies currently assigned to the city — and Duffy hopes to maintain their positive relationship.

"The way we do that is to fight the home rule charter and keep the state money coming to us in our general fund, so we can continue to provide good public safety and not mandating them to do things that aren't really affecting our city," Duffy said. "We've seen crime rates and drug rates go down. We really need to keep focusing on public safety for our citizens."

Duffy also touched on improvements to the city's streets and water and sewer system. He mentioned the current application for a \$3.5 million block grant to finalize upgrades to the sewer and collection system, and referred to having received written support from state legislators such as Rep. Greg Walden and Senators Merkley and

Wyden.

Rutherford, an Elgin resident since 2013, also cited road and sewer repairs as "to-do" items if elected, along with keeping businesses in the city.

"When I moved to Elgin there were quite a few businesses there. We want to keep our businesses, instead of letting them close down," Rutherford said. "If we lose any more businesses, our city is going to die."

Rutherford's campaign platform also focused on the city's residents and being open to their input concerning city matters.

"I've seen too much change in Elgin, too much controversy with 'big names' and small people that don't get their chances," he said. "If elected, I will take every consideration that comes across my desk and give every citizen the chance to make their point."

Both Rutherford and Duffy later responded to questions concerning economic development in Elgin.

"If (another city) doesn't want (a business), maybe we can find a spot for them in Elgin and keep our community alive," Rutherford answered.

Duffy expanded on Rutherford's statement, citing the city has already taken advantage of such situations.

"I think (economic development) is going to rely on us working with other communities and preparing an overall plan for Union County that will work for everybody," Duffy said.

He said past collaborations with other small cities have resulted in business

leads. Other towns may not have the capacity or demand for a particular business prospect, but may share those leads with the Elgin City Council, Duffy said.

Both candidates also touched on the relationship between the city government and the citizens of Elgin.

"(Many of) our citizens (live) outside the city limits, so they cannot vote on city ordinance, which is ridiculous," Rutherford commented.

Duffy countered Rutherford's remarks, saying all Elgin residents have the opportunity to voice their comments and concern, whether or not they can vote in city elections.

"All community groups have a place on the (city council) agenda to speak and to share," Duffy replied. "Many folks outside Elgin (city limits) consider Elgin their home, and as I've stressed to them, they may not be able to vote in the city election, but they have an ear and can share their concerns."

Winding down the mayoral portion of the forum, both candidates issued closing remarks.

"I've never run for an office before, so I'm new at this," Rutherford said of his candidacy. "I'm going to fight for the citizens and be their voice (in the council)."

"I've enjoyed being mayor of Elgin. I think I have a proven track record," Duffy said. "One thing any mayor wants is their city (to be) 'on the map,' and I strive hard to do that. I just ask Elgin residents for their trust and for two more years."

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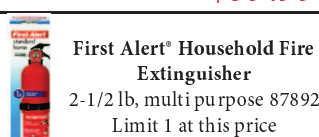
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