

# Barnes chosen to fill Clark County Commission seat

VANCOUVER, Wash. — Ed Barnes, a retired business manager of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48, was sworn in June 10 to the Clark County Board of Commissioners.

Barnes, 80, was selected by Commissioners David Madore and Tom Mielke to fill the unexpired term of Steve Stuart, who resigned in April to take a job as city manager of Ridgefield. Barnes will serve the District 3 post until the end of the year.

A new commissioner will be elected in November. Barnes is not running for the position next term.

The installation of Barnes ends months of acrimony in this Southwest Washington county that includes the cities of Vancouver, Washougal, Camas, Battle Ground, and Ridgefield.

Under Washington law, the political party of the resigning county official must submit a list of three names to the sitting Board of Commissioners — in order of preference — to complete the term. The commissioners then have 60 days to select a replacement. If they don't make an appointment in that time frame, the governor makes the choice. [Gov. Jay Inslee is a Democrat.]

Stuart is a Democrat, so the Clark County Democrats Central Committee conducted an interview process, after which they chose Craig Pridemore, a former county commissioner and former state senator, as their top choice. They picked Kelly Love Parker, president of the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce and a former news reporter for KGW Channel 8 in Portland, as their second choice, and Barnes as their third choice. Both Parker and Barnes support Pridemore, and Pridemore has filed to run for a full commission term.

However, Madore and Mielke — the two sitting commissioners — are Republicans. And it just so happens that fellow Republican Jeanne Stewart, a former Vancouver city councilor, is challenging Pridemore for the District 3 county seat.

Clark County residents have been skeptical from the outset, predicting that Madore and Mielke would never



Ed Barnes (right) is sworn in June 10 as a Clark County commissioner by Vancouver Prosecuting Attorney Tony Golik. Standing to the left is Commissioner David Madore.

appoint Pridemore because it might give him an advantage come Election Day. The two commissioners interviewed all the finalists, but after several weeks they declared that they

couldn't reach consensus. But with the 60-day deadline quickly approaching, on June 3 they announced Barnes the interim commissioner.

Barnes attends commission meet-

ings on a regular basis, where he often butts heads with Madore and Mielke. He's even been threatened with a defamation lawsuit by Clark County Department of Environmental Services Director Don Benton.

Madore and Mielke hired Benton, a Republican friend, without following traditional county hiring procedures. Barnes and other residents say Benton isn't qualified for the job, and that the hiring was nothing more than "political cronyism." Barnes' repeated questioning of the hiring led Benton to send him a "cease and desist" letter under threat of a lawsuit.

After accepting the appointment, Barnes told the Labor Press: "I let Madore and Mielke know that I'm not going to let them put me down. I still have my opinion, and that's not going to change. If I disagree with them on something, I will let them know."

Barnes said he hadn't been on the job for a day when he received his first two hate emails.

Barnes is a long-time member of IBEW Local 48 and a former president of the Columbia Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council. After retiring in 1995, he compiled a long list of achievements in labor, civic, public service and political activities, including serving 12 years on Washington's Transportation Commission.

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## ...Contractor accused of violating labor law

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threatened to fire workers if they attended a union meeting, fired one worker for wearing a union T-shirt, fired other union supporters on fabricated pretexts, attempted to quell the union campaign by giving raises of up to several dollars an hour, and even put a question about union affiliation on its employee application form to screen out potential union supporters.

As the hearing on those charges began, Edwards was unprepared, telling the judge he hadn't read through the law he was accused of violating, nor documents the NLRB had submitted as evidence, nor even his own sworn affidavit. McCarrick, flown up from San Francisco to judge the case, patiently explained rules of procedure to Edwards. But he had to intervene repeatedly — like when Grant Edwards

interrupted to correct his dad's testimony, or when Gene Edwards tried to rebut witness testimony during cross-examination, or when Oldham was on the witness stand and Gene Edwards, acting as his own lawyer, asked him to divulge which workers had been planning to attend a union meeting.

At one point, NLRB attorney Rachel Harvey asked Edwards what happened to the employee information form that asked (unlawfully) whether an applicant was a union member. Edwards said he put it in the shredder.

"As soon as I did it I thought it was stupid, but I can't undo it," Edwards testified.

Given the facts that tumbled out during the five-day trial, it's hard to understand how Edwards Painting gets as much business as it does. After operating for 45 years, Edwards Painting has no office, but instead is run out of Edwards' private home in a residential area of Oregon City. Once a week, up to 20 employees come by to pick up paychecks left for them on a shelf outside the house. The company maintains little or no personnel files beyond handwritten pay sheets and IRS forms. When Harvey asked why the company hadn't complied with the subpoena request for I-9 forms, Edwards said he doesn't have any, and doesn't even know what an I-9 is. An I-9 is the form employers use to verify that an employee is legally entitled to work in the

United States. Up to half the company's employees are foreign-born.

The company also has no real drug policy, written or otherwise. That featured in one of the stranger incidents that came up in the trial. Pro-union worker Sean Carter had complained to Edwards that a co-worker was using drugs on the job. Edwards told the accused co-worker, who then allegedly sent text messages to Carter threatening to kill him and harm his family, and to sic a biker gang on him. Oldham helped Carter file a police report, and then Oldham and McMinn confronted Edwards about the situation. Edwards reply was that the accused worker could take a drug test up to three days later. If he failed the test, he'd be fired; if he passed, Carter would be fired. When Oldham and McMinn objected, Edwards told them to get a drug test too, though he didn't follow through on that directive. In the trial, Gene Edwards denied he'd heard from Carter about drug use, contradicting what he'd said in the sworn affidavit with the NLRB agent. Carter, who was fired by the company in August 2013, failed to appear at the trial, ignoring a subpoena and attempts to contact him.

The hearing went through May 9, and concluded on May 20 after five days of testimony. The two sides have until June 24 to submit final arguments. McCarrick could issue his decision by early August.

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