

Columbia County Commissioners Candidates Questionnaire

By Scott Laird

Vernonia's Voice sent the following Questions to the four Candidates for Columbia County Commissioner: Republican Glenn Dorschler and Democrat Earl Fisher running for Position 1; and Republican Tony Hyde And Democrat Pat Zimmerman running for Position 3. Here are their answers to our questions.

Question 1: What do you think is the most important issue facing Columbia County citizens that you feel you can directly impact as a County Commissioner?

Glenn Dorschler: I believe that the future of Columbia County will depend upon economic growth and job creation, which is one of the most important issues that we face. I believe I can impact this growth and creating a positive atmosphere for corporations, companies and businesses to want to build here in Columbia County.

Earl Fisher: Quality of life, family wage jobs. The loss of federal tax money due to the timber revenue issue has a direct impact on Columbia County's quality of life. Hopefully, our federal officials will extend the monies Columbia County lost due reductions in our timber harvests for one more year.

If the extension happens, we can piece together a revenue plan for the long term that will continue to fund county services such as public safety, roads, schools and other services that impact our quality of life and to a degree, help provide good paying jobs.

Tony Hyde: Jobs and the local economy. Clearly, in Vernonia, there is the added burden of the flood recovery. With the commute rate in Columbia County at over 65%, our citizens are not only working out of County but shopping and going to the doctor out of County as well. We also start to lose social infrastructure. Neighbors hardly know neighbors. There is little time for PTA, kids' sports, city council, church affiliations, and civic organizations. Our sense of community becomes strained. We must work to retain and expand our existing businesses as well as to create new local jobs.

Pat Zimmerman: We need more local jobs that pay family wages and benefits. I will support and expand existing small and medium sized businesses and recruit more like them – this will be my first priority. We must not become a dumping ground for polluting industries that Portland doesn't want – we must preserve our beautiful rural and small town lifestyles.

Question 2: How do you feel about proposed development and expansion at the Vernonia Airport?

Dorschler: I believe that if the leadership coupled with the citizens have a vision for development at the airport, that would certainly bring about growth and job creation, which is greatly needed for Vernonia. I also believe however, that the first priority in building new school for the children and youth of Vernonia which will be the best for them at this time; with that added infrastructure for Vernonia, businesses will also want to build and grow as well.

Fisher: I believe the Vernonia airport needs to be developed, but done properly. I had serious concerns about the previous proposal for the development of the Vernonia airport because it failed to meet the current land use requirements. We have to view the Vernonia airport location as a community asset that needs to be fully developed. We need to make sure that as a county, we get the maximum benefit from this project to provide jobs that pay a living wage.

Hyde: First of all, as County Commissioner, it is not prudent to comment on any "proposed" land use as it would be considered "exparte contact", which means that we would have a conversation about a land use application outside of a public hearing setting. Generally, I am very supportive of job creating ideas. I have a history of listening to all sides of an issue while trying to find a win/win resolution.

Zimmerman: I strongly support this development, but it should take place at an appropriately zoned location. The Vernonia Airport is surrounded by residential neighborhoods. There are no facilities for industrial development at the airport – nearby residences have water from hand dug 12' wells, no community sewer, only 110V electric and only dialup internet access. The developer's proposed development lacks evidence of any kind that it needs an airport right next to it. There are multiple ready-to-build sites within the Vernonia city limits and within the Urban Growth Boundary, which would be perfect for this development. Why destroy a residential neighborhood unnecessarily?

Question 3: As a County Commissioner what will you do to encourage economic development in Columbia County?

Dorschler: I believe that the future economic growth and job creation is located at the Scappoose Airport; there are 600 acres that if we can attract the right companies to build, that economic growth and job creation will have a rippling effect through out Columbia County. I believe I can articulate this vision and with the county's leadership coupled with the strategic tool of advertising the opportunity we have in Columbia County will bring about economic growth.

Fisher: Working with people, listening. Getting stakeholders together at the table. However, in addition, I also believe that having a well-trained workforce would be an enticement for businesses to want to locate here. I believe it is important to bring together union apprenticeship programs and local community colleges to develop and to invest in work force training. As a retired school district superintendent, I can attest to the "before & after" effects first hand as preliminary workforce training programs were cut for my students. Not every student is necessarily "college bound." One thing I would very much like to do as a Columbia County commissioner, is to establish a skills training center in the county at the Trojan park site near Rainier. My approach would be to work with the state to turn the PGE site into a state park and have the state provide the existing buildings to the county for a training site. Working with Portland Community College, Clatsop Community College, and Lower Columbia, this site could provide training programs in Columbia County. Trade unions and local industries would be asked to be involved in providing the equipment, programs, and expertise to provide the skilled labor force this region needs. My educational connections as a school superintendent in the region, position as a board Chair of the Northwest Regional Educational Service District and political position as a seated county commissioner will give me a unique position to establish this center. As a concept, it would resemble the Capital Center in the Beaverton area.

Hyde: Just that, encourage economic development. Commissioners must be available to meet with businesses and local governments alike. We should be cheerleaders, conveners, facilitators, and enablers. Commissioners need to have a first hand knowledge of each local economy and the challenges and opportunities that each hold. We should have a good understanding of the economic tools that are available to build needed infrastructure, a strong workforce, site a business, etc. Finally, we should be adept at dealing with state and federal officials, advocating for the interest of local officials at the state legislature.

Zimmerman: I will work to direct state and federal economic development money to support existing small and medium sized businesses and recruit more of them. I will not waste time and money trying to lure multi-national billionaire corporations to our county as has been done by the current commissioner. Our natural resources – forest products – can be a source for cellulosic ethanol production and carbon sequestration. As our energy crisis deepens we are perfectly positioned to help our nation wean itself from foreign oil by using our forests.

Question 4: Loss of funding at the county level will probably result in the need to reduce county delivered services in the near future. How do you plan to deal with this?

Dorschler: The loss of funding for Columbia County is a serious matter which would require us to tighten our budget's; the painful task of having to probably reduce county delivered services would require prioritization but it should also mean that contributions from citizens and churches will be needed to help carry the burden for the needs of our neighbors who are facing hardship.

Fisher: Prioritize which services are most needed and work with the people who are most impacted: Workers and employers as well as those who receive those services. My task as county commissioner would be to find opportunities for federal matching dollars to enhance existing ser-

vices and to help alleviate financial pressures on services that otherwise would be discontinued. In addition, we need to work with and listen to the affected populations impacted by public services. Gathering their feedback about services so the services that are delivered, are done so in the most efficient and effective manner. In short, continue to do what we can do, and to maximize the financial resources that our county has coming to us with federal dollars.

Hyde: Our '08-'09 budget already anticipates the loss of timber funds (PL106-393). We used some "one time" monies for this year and we know that next year the cuts could be Draconian. Our approach is two fold. First, the counties have been working with the Governors office on the "Governor's Task Force on Federal Forest Payments and County Services". This report will have a number of recommendations and proposals for short and long term fixes, not the least of which would allow us to better manage our Federal Forest through a new Harvest Management Plan. Second, we need to extend our Federal Timber Payments for another four years to allow us time to implement the plan.

Zimmerman: I believe the county can work smarter, saving money that can be used to improve our potholed roads and provide 24/7 Sheriff's patrols and better emergency response. I will use the Internet extensively and post all public documents as they are received rather than using staff time to unearth and copy--at \$.25/page--information that the public has every right to know. I will implement zero-based budgeting, which is common practice in business and, increasingly so, in government but unknown to Columbia County. We must prioritize funding for those services most important the majority of our citizens. Expensive trips to Washington DC and weekly meetings in Salem and Portland should be lower priority than providing services to our citizens.

Question 5: Columbia County is considered a "rural county" but faces expansion and development from it's urban neighbors. Do you see growth in Columbia County as a good or bad thing, and how will you work in this area as a commissioner?

Dorschler: Because of the opportunities and the beautiful rural atmosphere in Columbia County, growth is inevitable. Growth can be a good thing or bad; but we need, which I believe I will bring, is a positive and hard working desire to work with the leadership that will bring positive growth and job creation so that we will leave a lasting legacy for our children, grandchildren, and future generations.

Fisher: Growth is inevitable. What is truly at issue is quality of life while maintaining the reasons why people move and/or stay in Columbia in the first place. We need to get to get ahead of the growth curve and control the growth and manage it, to maintain the uniqueness of our county.

Hyde: Growth is inevitable. We are, however considered by the federal government to be part of the Portland Metropolitan statistical Area aka PMSA. This is solely based on census data around our commute rate. I believe that growth can be a good thing as long as we have a common strategy. We need a collective vision as to how we can position ourselves to have shovel-ready industrial sites, world-class tourism, and vibrant communities. Healthy communities can support public transportation, education, a strong workforce, public safety and a future for our kids.

Zimmerman: Growth itself is neither good nor bad. The "what", "where" and "when" of growth, however, should be managed for the good of the whole community and to create a sustainable future. Few of us want strip malls down Hwy. 47, but it could happen if the County Commissioners don't protect our land. I'm all for appropriate development in appropriately zoned areas. But I also believe we need to preserve our forestlands, for timber, carbon sequestration and possibly cellulosic ethanol production, which may become major factors in the coming years. We need to balance residential with commercial/industrial development. New houses don't pay enough taxes to support the services they use. If they did, there would never be a bond issue to expand sewer, water, police or other services because they would be paying their way. Growth is coming. We need to grow smarter.

DOUBLE C TACK



October Specials!

Featured Sale Items Include...

- Folding Hay Hauler \$69.99
- 8qt. Tub Feeder \$9.95
- English Saddle/Bridle Combo 16" or 17" (your choice) \$399.99
- Pony Saddle Breast Collar Bridle Combo \$249.99
- Polebending Bases \$199.99
- International Riding Helmets \$34.95

NOW CARRYING HILLSBORO FEED - GET IT LOCALLY!

- Cob (wet or dry) \$13.29
- Rolled Corn \$13.95
- Whole Oats \$10.95
- Senior Horse (wet or dry) \$11.95
- Arena Blend 14% \$9.95
- Rolled Barley \$13.95

NOW CARRYING TEX TAN LEATHER

Bridles (variety of colors) \$33.95-\$35.95

CONSIGNMENTS WELCOME

Open Mon-Fri 10am-7pm and Sat 10am-6pm
Available Sunday for Emergencies... Call cell (503) 702-0081

503-429-TACK (8225)

Located Inside Creatures DoubleC.Tack@yahoo.com

736 Bridge Street, Vernonia OR 97064