

Candidates Discuss Issues at Two Forums *continued from page 6*

If we're going to develop Port Westward we have to be smart about it and not stick our money in failed fossil fuel industries. Yes, it has failed. But with the proper development it could be a great place for us." Preheim noted that "Port of St. Helens has been woefully mis-managed," and called for a change in the management team. "The manager has a credibility issue and as a County Commissioner I would be happy to say that to the Port." Preheim also commented on the ethanol plant at Port Westward, stating, "That's never going to work. There is a problem at Port Westward and it's been the leadership in the County and pretending that it didn't happen isn't going to make it better. We need to not continue to use our tax dollars on failed projects."

Yarbor said Port Westward is a big plus for the entire county and has been a positive for the Clatskanie community, bringing jobs and economic growth. He noted that the lack of infrastructure in the past led to the loss of potential industry. Now that the County has invested in infrastructure it is the perfect place for development. "Things don't happen overnight, but it's starting to pay off now," said Yarbor.

Hyde pointed to two decades of negative growth in Clatskanie prior to the development at Port Westward. He cited the deep water port and 1,300 acres of available industrial zoned land. "What was wrong was they did not have the infrastructure," said Hyde. He said the county created an Urban Renewal District that would capture taxes from new industry to pay off the debt incurred to install a water system, roads and rail improvements. "It's industrial ready and I don't think we wasted that money. We have been getting it ready and we have lots of suitors. Failed? I don't see it," said Hyde. Hyde also commented on the ethanol plant, noting the company there is investing millions of dollars on a public road. "If they intend to leave, why are they doing that?" asked Hyde.

Tardif said that, whether we agree with the "\$35-\$55 million" in investments previously made, we now need to do something with it, and suggested that fossil fuels are not reliable and not a guarantee for our future. He suggested high tech or agriculture as potential industries that could flourish there. "What we're utilizing it for right now is not the way of the future," said Tardif. He suggested that the biggest issue is access, as Port Westward is at the

far end of the county with no direct access to I-5, which companies looking to locate here have stated is a barrier.

Legal Marijuana

The candidates discussed newly legalized marijuana as an economic stimulus and all agreed that since the people voted for it, the county needs to work within the state mandate, but had some differing points of view on how it might benefit the county.

Tardif suggested the county has been "shortsighted" while failing to embrace marijuana as a potential industry and suggested the county has the potential to include not just growing operations, but processing, manufacturing, production, and research. "There is a lot of money to be made in this industry. We are perfectly situated to pioneer an entire new industry here in Oregon. We're not taking advantage of it. There are so many new revenue streams that we could tap into."

Hyde said the county is keeping an eye on this emerging industry, but that he doesn't see it as a revenue stream right now.

Yarbor took issue with how the county is allowing marijuana to be grown outdoors in rural areas, stating that it should only be grown in warehouses.

Magruder agreed that marijuana could be an agricultural crop but the county needs to be careful how it develops the rules around it and thoughtfully plan it out.

Funding Law Enforcement and the Jail

The candidates disagreed when asked about how to solve funding issues for law enforcement and the county jail.

Yarbor said the county did the right thing by looking to the future when they originally built a 265 bed county jail that could be run efficiently and said the county was guaranteed inmates from the federal government, which ended up not being provided. He also stated he is not in favor of new taxes. He noted later that a previous attempt to have cities and the county work together to provide law enforcement coverage did not work well. "None of them wanted to agree on anything," said Yarbor.

Hyde stated that the jail, which

replaced a 49 bed jail that was constantly overly full, was built on time and within budget. He said a recent analysis showed that the beds the county is renting cost them \$9/day and they receive over \$80/day from the feds. Hyde said the county is renting out 55-80 beds a day and said the jail will be paid off in the next two years. He also noted that law enforcement is not cheap and takes up 25% of the county annual budget. Hyde agreed he doesn't like new taxes. "The time

might be coming when we need to start talking about consolidation of services," said Hyde.

Tardif suggested a partnership with rural fire districts to house sheriff's deputies, "...someone who is local and closer to those communities."

He also stated that no

one did the financial analysis correctly when the jail was built. "They built a jail they couldn't fund and then ran out of money," said Tardif. "This is why I'm running for Commissioner, because I have the foresight, I understand the numbers, and I also recognize balancing what we can afford with what we need." He suggested that, yes, the jail will be paid off by 2018, but that it was done with a tax levy because the funding wasn't there. "We need to move forward and look for ways to prevent these kinds of situations from happening again," said Tardif.

Magruder likes the idea of

sharing resources between cities and the county and pointed to Clatskanie where this is already being discussed. She also stated that improved economics and tax revenue in the county could help fund the jail and keep the county from asking taxpayers to foot the bill again.

Preheim adamantly disagreed with the \$9/day cost that Hyde stated. "That is not the cost and the committee was so focused on trying to cover up our past mistakes in building a jail that was too big for our needs and was built specifically to house federal prisoners to the point of absurdity," said Preheim. "The jail, in reality costs about \$118/day to house a federal prisoner and that is not a model of efficiency when the average to house a federal prisoner is about \$80/day." Preheim also disagreed with Yarbor and said there was no guarantee of federal prisoners and that there was also a plan to expand the jail after it was built. "It was built for federal prisoners and we need to admit that was a mistake. We would be in even worse shape if that expansion had happened," said Preheim.

Mayo says a jail is a necessity and will require another bond measure in 2017. "We have to pass that and we have to run our jail, but in the future we need to look at other options in that regard," and suggested increasing the depletion fee on gravel as a funding option. He said the current revenues don't add up and need to be examined.

Conn said she spearheaded the last efforts to pass the bond and keep the jail open because "...we need to be able to protect our citizens. I think it is money wisely spent," said Conn.

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"I'm running for Commissioner, because I have the foresight, I understand the numbers, and I also recognize balancing what we can afford with what we need," said Tardif.

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