

2016 Election Endorsements

By Scott Laird

In a bit of an unusual move for me, I'm going to try and be direct and to the point here. If you would like to know more about any of these candidates, please read my review of the "Meet the Candidates" political forum starting on the front page.

City Council: Bruce McNair and Susan Wagner

Bruce McNair has been one of, if not the best, member of the City Council in the 12 years I have been following it. He takes time to research the issues and tries to understand all the implications of the Council's decisions. He's not afraid to ask the hard questions, and while he can be a thorn in the side of the staff and other Council members, he does it for the right reasons - he is trying to do what is right for all the citizens of this community. We couldn't ask for a better public servant.

Susan Wagner has the experience to serve in this position - City Budget Committee, Planning Commission, School Board - this was the logical next step for her. She has been attending City Council meetings for the last few months

to prepare herself and is informed and organized, two great characteristics for a City Councilor.

While Mike Buffum is well meaning and I appreciate his willingness to serve, he needs a better and more comprehensive understanding of the current issues facing the City and the way the City functions.

Mayor: Kim Tierney

Kim Tierney has been working hard in her position as a City Councilor and has earned this opportunity. Her professional experience will be a bonus, and now that she is retired she will have more time to dedicate to working for the City. She is familiar with the vision of the current staff and the scope of current projects, and has a good working relationship with the current Council. She will make the transition to a new Mayor easy for everyone.

Mario Leonetti's past experience on the Council and as Mayor is a plus and his relationships as a business owner give him insight into the wants and needs of the citizens. He's somewhat out of the loop on current issues at City Hall and has not attended a City Council meeting in a long while - always a red

flag for me when someone runs for these positions. He has some good ideas and brings a fresh perspective, but with things running so smoothly at City Hall right now, why upset the apple cart. **County Commissioner: Margaret Magruder**

Margaret Magruder brings a wealth of experience on various boards and commissions that will help her navigate the county's business. While she seemed to lack specific details about the issues she would like to address, she does have a vast knowledge about what is happening in the County. She seems like the safe bet in a year when two new Commissioners will take office.

Wayne Mayo has always been a bit of a wild card, but this election cycle he has been much more on message and to the point. He still has a tendency to stray when discussing specific issues and can get lost in his own head. He is passionate and brings fresh ideas and wants to help the citizens, I'm just not sure which Wayne Mayo will show up if he's elected.

School Bond: The Vernonia School District needs to get rid of this debt that is slowly strangling them - VOTE YES!

Meet the Candidates *continued from front page*

be a benefit to the community. She encouraged everyone to vote and use their voice, whoever they chose to support.

Mike Buffum says he is running for office because he really likes Vernonia and wanted to do something to give back to the community. He says the town has always been really helpful, especially after the 2007 flood when his home was damaged. He said he has time to spend working as a Councilor. He says he is not a politician, which he thinks is a benefit.

Margaret Magruder is a long time Columbia County resident and farmer who has served on the Columbia County Budget Committee, the Oregon Board of Agriculture, the District 5J School Board, the American Lamb Board, and the Columbia County Extension Budget Committee. She is a small business owner and has served as a 4-H leader. She says her knowledge of natural resources and experience in government provide her with the background to work collaboratively with the citizens of the County. She believes Columbia County is a great place to live, work, and play, with high quality people.

Wayne Mayo is a Scappoose businessman who has worked in construction for 36 years. He raised seven children in Columbia County. He has served on the Scappoose Planning Commission and St. Helens Parks Commission. He says he got more involved in County government around the hospital issue, and says he is running because he knows he can do better. He said he wanted to keep taxes low, keep county services as good as they can, take care of the roads, and support the Sheriff's Office. Mayo added that he helped deliver his youngest son when he was born before they could reach the hospital and joked that, "If you ever need someone to catch a baby, I can do it!"

The following are the questions the candidates were asked and a

paraphrasing of their responses:

Name some positive things, or things you think are going well in the City/County?

Wagner talked about the people of Vernonia, their generosity, devotion, and willingness to pull together. She praised the use of the Community

Bulletin Boards on Facebook as a way that people share information and help each other. "The people here make this community," said Wagner.

McNair looked at several new projects that he termed "the three legged stool" - the school campus, the Health

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