

County Commissioner Candidates Respond *continued from front page*

away with the ordinances that the voters have voted in place, and they are great at spending resources to fight against what we believe.

Kellie Jo Smith – Within our communities are some of the hardest working and dedicated individuals. Our neighbors, teachers, small business owners, millwrights, caretakers, etc. are making things happen for the betterment of all of us within our cities. It's to those individuals (like those responsible for putting in the Vernonia Skate Park) that we have the opportunities to celebrate and smile.

Really we can complain about a number of things but when it comes down to it we have wonderful communities, and great opportunities right here in our backyard.

Kelly Niles – I like the county bringing in NEXT Renewables. We need family wage jobs and additional revenue. I like the trail project they are pursuing through our forests. People need a place to recreate while protecting our natural resources. I also like the project they are working on for the citizens in the Prescott area. The water/sewer systems are inadequate and they are looking to rectify that situation.

Jonathon Barclay – There are many things I love about Columbia County which is why I chose to lay down my roots here. Vernonia is one of the shining stars of this county which is sometimes forgotten. Downtown Vernonia is vibrant and thriving where some of the other larger cities are not. Another point of praise is the effort to improve public access to our wonderful parks and the improvement of trail systems and beaches.

3. What are some specific issues or concerns you would like to try to address if you are elected and what would you try to do. (250 word limit)

Brian Brust – The first thing we must do is to remind the county government that they are representatives of the citizens of Columbia County, and they are to do the will of the citizens. The citizens must be informed of events weekly. The only way we empower people is to inform them. Our county commissioners are required to notify the public of upcoming meetings by putting it in the paper and on the county website. I ask them why they don't choose to inform the Republican party, the Democrat party, different groups that have organized, send out an email to one representative of each group, and put it on bulletin boards on Facebook for each city of the county. The commissioners could do this with a keystroke once it was set up, but they chose to keep us in the dark. These meetings that are held on Wednesday mornings at 10:30 are considered successful when they have 10 people in them, but if you were to ask the average citizen in Columbia County what the next upcoming meeting is about, not many people know. It's not that they don't care, it's just they're not informed. If citizens are required to get building permits and jump through hoops, make improvements to their lives they should not be charged. The idea that you should have to pay a fee to the county to better your life is ridiculous. The county should be there to facilitate your needs. The county works for us.

Kellie Jo Smith – My first priority will be to learn and listen. With Commissioner Heimuller leaving there will be gaps in established projects, and I will want to assess where I am needed before I start leading with my own ideas.

As an individual citizen I'd say Health & Safety are a top priority. We've just been through a pandemic that was really hard on many families and residents

around the county. I'd hope that we would focus resources and energy on spiritual, mental and physical services. Our children need to see us coming together as a community, moving towards thriving, showing them that WE will ALL be okay.

With areas of Columbia County being so remote, we need to continue to focus on roads and connectivity, while also making sure that there are emergency services available when needed.

Kelly Niles – That there is no future plan. It seems everything is reactive instead of proactive. We need to bring industry, agency stakeholders, and citizens to the table to plan for our future. We need family wage jobs here. Some people don't want growth and others do. I have been told 70% of people commute outside the county for work. We need to stop saying no to industry. Do we open it up for anyone? No. We can bring in jobs but be selective by doing our research and making sure the industry we are looking at is going to be a good community partner and have minimal impacts on our natural resources and the people who live here.

Jonathon Barclay – I think my biggest focus will be on high speed internet for all and traffic on highway 30.

4. What is your vision for the future of Columbia County? (250 word limit)

Brian Brust – The future I see for Columbia County is a county that's working for

the citizens and not the state. We should be incentivizing departments within the county to save money. Right now, departments spend all allotted funds to ensure they get the same amount of money if not more the following year. Imagine that we incentivize savings by telling each department that the money they save within the department will get all members of the department a bonus. Each member of that department will get a percentage of the money saved. After 2 to 3 years if a department can save funds, we lower the budget of the department and give the personnel a raise to equal the bonuses that each received. This will save money for the county in the long run. We must inform the people of the county of meetings, and we need to have more input from our local successful business leaders. I have been knocking on doors of homes and businesses in our communities. There are so many ideas given to improve the way our county works or operates to enhance the people of this county. We need to ensure safe communities, good schools and great recreational opportunities.

Kellie Jo Smith – Growth that considers our unique small towns, and our rural environments. We cherish our communities and are proud of our natural resources. We also see the benefits of family wage jobs that allow us to stay within our county, so that more people can live and work here,

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Publisher and Managing Editor

Scott Laird

503-367-0098

scott@vernoniasvoice.com

Contributors

Congresswoman

Suzanne Bonamici

Damien Cox

Shannon Romtvedt

Photography

Scott Laird

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