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HECK ...

Continued from A-1



Nathaniel Duarte

The youngest candidate, 20-year-old Nathaniel Duarte, said, “I’m running for commissioner because I am concerned about the future of this county, the lack of positivity, the breakdown of communication. I have been watching local politics for about six years now. ... I firmly believe that the biggest issue our county is facing is a crisis of communication.”

Commissioner Keith Heck pointed out that many things are going right in JoCo. “One of the things that bothers me is when Josephine County is portrayed as this basket-case county and everybody is portrayed as either nuts, a loony tunes or getting on dope. It is sad sad picture to paint,” he said. “We do have a funding issue as it applies to the criminal justice system. ...The balance of the county is not in funding crises. Many of the departments, such as parks, are self-funding.” Heck went onto express that the criminal justice system issues are indeed serious, but that, “It’s not the whole county that is going down the tubes.”



Dale Matthews

Candidate Dale Matthews, who runs a website, Badcounty.com, said he attends more county commissioner meetings than the sitting commissioners do, and added, “In fact, I go to more county commissioners’ meetings than all the other candidates combined. I know a little bit about what’s happening there, now, and you’ll get a chance to vote for two people. I’m simply going to suggest that one of the two people that you vote for, that would be me, would know what to do on day one.”

Moderator and *Illinois Valley News* publisher, Daniel Mancuso, said he believes there’s two major issues in the Illinois Valley: money and marijuana, and then asked the candidates if they would support a county-wide ban on growing marijuana (more than four plants) on properties zoned RR5 (five-acre rural residential lots).

Most candidates said



Sandi Cassennilli

they wouldn’t support such a ban, acknowledging the economic role that marijuana now plays in JoCo, however several candidates expressed reservations and concerns.

Candidate Paul Walter, who runs a website,



Paul Walter

newswithviews.com, said he’s “studying” how things are going in Colorado since that state legalized recreational marijuana. “It’s a disaster because kids are getting high, and there are lots of accidents and they’re not learning properly in school, so it is something you really have to look into. ...I don’t want our economy to be known as the dope economy of the USA.”

Candidate Joseph Rice said, “Marijuana has been legalized by the people, we have a representative form of government. Period. With that, we’re tasked with how we manage it. ... Recreational use, I believe, like grapes or wine, like any agricultural crop, needs to be treated and managed like alcohol. The medicinal side, also, I don’t believe banning a specific product that’s been legalized by the citizens is an appropriate move. But we have an opportunity here to responsibly come together, look at it and manage it.”

Harris said she supports the cannabis industry, but that, “It will take work and we must respect those living next door. There are issues of respecting each others’ rights and being good neighbors.”

Harris also expressed concerns about water use.

Mancuso then asked candidates about their work history and what jobs they’d held that had managerial and budgetary responsibility.



Harriet Harris

Candidate Toni Webb said, “Well I think I am unique in all the candidates in that I have the education and the experience in finance and budgeting. I have a master’s in business administration. In my personal experiences I’ve owned three small businesses; the largest one had a \$2 million annual budget with 13 employees. I’ve also worked at a large corporation in finance, and this corporation was worth a billion dollars capitalized on the NY Stock Exchange. ... I have a lot experience with budget and finance, both in small business and large corporations.”

Mancuso then expanded on a point that Duarte had made: “That as commissioners: You’re spending our money.”

Mancuso said a good way to determine how well someone is going to treat others’ money is how they treat their own money; and then asked the candidates if they have any liens, judgments, wage

garnishments, credit card debt, or, if they owe the IRS any money.

All but one candidate said they are in sound financial shape and have no outstanding debts or liens, besides having a home mortgage.

Matthews said he owes some money to the IRS and on a credit card. Then he added, “No I don’t owe anything at all on student loans, because I got good enough grades that I never had to borrow any money.”

However research done by the *Illinois Valley News* indicates that this response is inaccurate as American University was awarded a judgment and a lien against Matthews dating back to 1995, in the amount of



Toni Webb

\$5,356.

Sonny Moore, president of the Chamber of Commerce asked the candidates how they might address the feeling that numerous I.V. residents have that have that many of the county’s resources do not make it into the Valley.



Joseph Rice

Rice said more resources need to be brought out the city [Grants Pass] and into the county. He said there should be more meetings in the Valley and that the sheriff’s office should be moved out of the city and that resident deputies should be stationed in rural county locations, and also, interface with the community watches more.

“I think all of Southern Oregon is considered to be the ugly stepchild [of the state],” DeYoung said. He pointed out how overall, JoCo gets the “bottom of the barrel” compared to the federal dollars that come



Dan DeYoung

into the state for roads and bridges. “There’s very little left over for JoCo,” he said. “So I feel your situation is the same way. Going back to urban-versus-rural, there’s a big philosophical difference between people living in Grants Pass and the people living in the county. There are eight different demographics and none of them have the same set of principles, values and lifestyle, so it is tough for the commissioners to cover all of them on a regular basis.” He added that the commissioners should have one regular business meeting in the Valley each month.



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