

Time to decide, Heck or DeYoung; Hunker or Morgan?

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IVN Contributing Writer

Candidates for Josephine County Commissioner faced the voters Thursday, Oct. 13 at a town-hall style forum hosted by *Illinois Valley News*. Candidates for positions 2 and 3 answered questions from Dan Mancuso of the *Illinois Valley News*, as well as from the public. Public safety dominated the conversation, but candidates also spoke about marijuana and economic development.

Keith Heck, incumbent position 2 commissioner, and challenger Dan DeYoung took the stage first. DeYoung, a retired businessman who was raised in Grants Pass, has served on the Grants Pass City Council for the last seven years. "I enjoy working for the people," he said. Serving on the council has given him a tremendous amount of experience working with the county and other agencies, he added. Heck, who has served one term as a county commissioner, describes himself as more of a people person than a project person. As a commissioner he has worked to be "a conduit for people's expressions and concerns," and he is looking forward to the opportunity to continue with the work that he has started during his last term.

The first question from Mancuso was about the candidates' attitude toward marijuana in Josephine County. Heck said, "Whether I like it or not, marijuana is a legal product in Oregon. We cannot ban it, so you try to make the best decisions possible for the greater good of the county. We do have a tax on the ballot in November. If that does pass, it may amount to \$10,000 or \$15,000 for the county coffers. It's not going to be a landslide of funding. So it's not like there is going to be this big tidal wave of money coming in." DeYoung compared the cannabis industry to the wine industry 20 years ago, saying that it needs some time to mature. "We are going to end up a couple of years from now with actual cannabis businesspeople that we'll be able to sit down and talk sensibly with, that will be willing to own some of the complaints that come along with the industry," he said.

When asked about proposed Planning Department changes to zoning laws in regard to cannabis, DeYoung said that as long as the county continues to allow the people to weigh in on those changes, then the process will work. Heck agreed. "One thing that I like is that we have a Planning Director who is working to address some of the issues," he said. "It's a whole long process," he added. "You have to make your voice heard. What are your likes, what are your dislikes," he asked



(Photo by Laura Mancuso, *Illinois Valley News*)

Bill Hunker (left) speaks while Lily Morgan looks on. The candidates faced off Thursday, Oct. 13, at the CJ County Building. Both candidates are running for the seat being vacated by County Commissioner Cheryl Walker.

constituents.

Candidates were then asked what they will do if the public safety levy fails and rural patrols stop. Heck responded, "That is a very difficult issue because the county cannot spend money that it doesn't have. We can only spend what we get in from property tax." According to Heck, roughly \$80 million of what the county brings in comes from federal grants, which cannot be moved from one department to another. "This is a very, very serious issue," he repeated. According to DeYoung, the county is doing well, aside from public safety. "Sheriff Daniel took over a pretty rough show, but he is working really hard to make this thing work. Until a goodly portion of money hits his budget, he is going to be struggling," said DeYoung.

Heck pointed out that even if the levy passes, the county would still be behind the levels of service that were offered five years ago. "The biggest problem with passing the levy, from my perspective," said Heck, "is that we do nothing different from what we have done the last 20 years, because in four years the money runs out and then we are back in the same position that we are now." DeYoung agreed. "Stable funding means that you can count on it year after year after year. We haven't had that for a long time," he said. He floated the idea of a tax district for public safety, which would provide long term funding

solely for the sheriff's department.

In terms of increasing county revenue, DeYoung proposed lobbying the state to receive a larger portion of state revenue from cannabis sales. According to DeYoung, Josephine and Jackson counties produce most of the cannabis sold in dispensaries in the state of Oregon. The way that Measure 91 was written, taxes from cannabis sales will be distributed to counties based on their population. DeYoung would like to lobby the state Legislature to receive more of that money based on the fact that we are more affected by the production of cannabis than other counties are. "We are the ones that need law enforcement to keep these growers from killing each other," he said. Heck pointed out that the only way to raise revenue is to raise taxes. "That is the only source that county government has of raising money, is through taxation," Heck said. "I wish there would be a greater acceptance and awareness of that throughout the county. There is no secret pot of money," he added.

When asked what he most wanted to accomplish in the next four years, DeYoung said he would work to re-establish the public's trust in county government. He is anxious to wrap his arms around the whole county. Heck said that he would like to be able to continue to work on the relationships that he has built over the last four years. He reiterated his

commitment to people and encouraged citizens to contact him at any time.

Next, candidates Lily Morgan and Bill Hunker, who are competing for County Commissioner Position 3, addressed the voters. Morgan's biggest priority, as a commissioner, would be public safety, closely followed by economic development. Hunker says he is running to bring a business perspective to the county. The biggest difference between the two candidates is their position on the upcoming public safety levy; Hunker is against the levy and Morgan is for it.

When asked the number one thing that he could have an impact on during his four-year term, Hunker responded that citizens of the county are distrustful of government. "I can promise you that I will be as transparent as possible as a county commissioner," he said. His goal is to regain the public's trust. In response to the same question, Morgan said that the biggest thing that she could do is develop the economy. "That means bringing to the table groups like the school district, the city, the county, groups like IVCando, the community development director, and figuring out what we need to do," she said. "How do we have jobs for our kids when they get out of school?"

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Glee Gum Halloween Lollipops. \$2.99 ea. Reg. \$4.19

Deli

Grill Menu: Cheeseburger. With a side salad. Lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, your choice of cheese & condiments. \$5.19 ea. Reg. \$5.69
Salad Case: Dill Potato Salad. Red potatoes, onion powder, salt, dill weed, veganaise. \$3.49 lb. Reg. \$3.99
Breakfast Menu: 2 Egg Scramble with Toast. Your choice meat, cheese, vegetables & toast. \$4.19 ea. Reg. \$4.69

Meat

Niman Ranch Uncured Ham Steak. \$6.99 lb. Reg. \$8.19 lb.
Applegate ABF Sunday Bacon. \$3.99 pkg. Reg. \$5.49 pkg.
Michael Angela's Asstd. Entrees. \$5.09 ea. Reg. \$5.99 ea.
Cascadian Asstd. Frozen Juices. \$4.09 ea. Reg. \$4.79 ea.

Frozen

Produce

Valencia Oranges. 79¢ lb. Reg. \$1.19 lb.
Kiwi. \$2.49 lb. Reg. \$3.19 lb.
Red Bartlett Pears. \$1.79 lb. Reg. \$1.99 lb.
Portabella Mushrooms. \$6.09 lb. Reg. \$6.89 lb.
Red & Green Grapes. \$2.69 lb. Reg. \$2.89 lb.

Cheese

Almond Cheese. \$3.79 ea. Reg. \$4.69 ea.
Mozzarella, Cheddar, 8 oz.
Jalepeno Jack. \$3.19 ea. Reg. \$3.99 ea.
David Jack Cheese. Habenero Jack, Garlic Jack, 8 oz.
Scallion Jack, Peper Jack. \$3.49 ea. Reg. \$4.29 ea.
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