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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Simpson and Conte have served as co-chairs of the association. Belcher praises Simpson as "one of our most respected leaders," but says Conte "was one of the worst chairs we've ever had. He was unwilling to consider anyone else's opinion and acted unilaterally several times without board approval. When the board tried to discuss their concerns, Paul resigned rather than participate — completing six months of his two-year term."

Conte agrees that his time with the neighborhood group was difficult. "Unfortunately, the JWN has for some years been dysfunctional and poorly supported by area residents," he says. "Meetings are rarely attended by more than a handful of people ... A number of people, myself included, feel that one of the problems is the way two or three people have co-opted the process to keep control of the organization. ... Over the past couple of years, a few of us have tried to change the direction by getting on the board. Ultimately, however, we failed. From our perspective the board process was subverted, and we didn't have the votes to prevent that. As a consequence, three board members and the newsletter editor resigned last fall. The disagreements leading up to this point were contentious."

Despite the neighborhood squabble, Conte says he's "worked very successfully with many different organizations in my consulting, publishing and speaking ... and most people who don't have a personal ax to grind will tell you I am conscientious and thorough, and that I respect

broad participation in process. Admittedly, I don't suffer fools gladly."

How do the two stand on key issues? On tiered rates (charging higher rates for those who use more electricity), Simpson says he's "not sure they are achieving their goal" and he wants to re-examine them. Conte is calling for a return to flat rates for residential customers. "Tiered rates hurt many people who live on fixed incomes [and] who live in their older, less efficient homes," he says.

On relocating EWEB headquarters and possibly selling the current site to McKenzie-Willamette/Triad for a hospital, both candidates are open to the idea as long as it doesn't cost EWEB ratepayers. Simpson says he does not want the urban growth boundary expanded to accommodate EWEB moving, and he wants EWEB to maintain a "downtown presence" with meeting rooms available to the public.

Regarding the proposed Coburg gas-fired power plant, Simpson says he's "against this project and don't see a need for it." Conte wants a "deeper analysis" and is concerned about air and water quality problems. But he notes that even wind power has environmental impacts, and adds that "it may be that smaller gas plants with the best environmental controls may have sufficiently low impact to be considered."

Both candidates say they favor renewable energy, conservation and protecting the environment. Simpson has been attending board meetings for a year; Conte has attended very few meetings. All things considered, Simpson gets our nod. **EW**

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