

HANDY VS. FARR

Distinct choices in the North Eugene commish race

By Ted Taylor

Lane County's sometimes dramatic conflict between environmentalists and resource extraction interests is reflected in the race for the North Eugene position on the Lane Board of County Commissioners. Incumbent Commissioner Rob Handy is challenged by Eugene City Councilor and former state lawmaker Pat Farr and interpreter Nadia Sindi. Sindi is not raising money and is running a low-key campaign and, for lack of space, is not included in this discussion.

The sources of funding for the Handy and Farr campaigns reflect very different constituencies in Lane County. Handy's campaign is financed primarily from hundreds of individual donations averaging \$69 each, while Farr's fewer contributions are dominated by business and industry donations averaging \$1,000 (see News Briefs this week).

The following comparisons are based on the candidates' public debates, past statements and interviews with *EW*.



Mary Leighton (right) outlines the rules to Nadia Sindi, Pat Farr and Rob Handy at a City Club forum April 12.

On budget and the economy:

Handy has several specific plans. One is to ask the Legislature to raise the very low taxes currently assessed on large private timberlands that make up 21 percent of the acreage in the county. "We are missing \$20 million a year in Lane County, and that would be a big boost to our budget, because corporate timber is not paying their fair share of taxes," he says. "It's now time for us to work with our Legislature, and that's more likely to get accomplished than looking to our federal government for help." Handy also proposed cutting \$1 million to \$1.5 million a year from county overhead by requiring the highest-paid county employees to take a pay cut equivalent to the cuts negotiated with unionized workers, a proposal that the conservative majority on the commission would not allow to be discussed. Handy is also pushing local food production and processing as a way to provide jobs, keep more money circulating locally, raise the tax base and make the county more resilient in the event of a natural disaster.

Farr says, "The best way to increase revenue in Lane County is to put people to work. People who work pay taxes and more people working means more taxes." He also blames the current crisis in part on former county commissioners who failed to set aside money for hard times. The commissioners "knew it [federal timber money] was going to go away, and it did, and now we're going hat-in-hand every year begging the feds for money. We need to start using our forests."

On the DeFazio forest plan:

Handy does not support the plan, saying it "will degrade water, and the privatization of public assets will be under the Oregon Forest Practices Act, which has no teeth in it. We're seeing clearcuts and our timber and jobs are being shipped overseas ... This super-sized mega-mechanized timber program won't benefit our rural communities. We'd be much better off operating under BLM and the 1937 O&C Act than the Oregon Forest Practices Act."

Farr supports the forest plan, saying, "Trees grow and logging will be on a sustained basis. The best part about the bill is it puts money back into the system; it brings in dollars for schools, dollars for roads, dollars to operate general government in Lane County and the city of Eugene."

'We saved Lane County \$1 million ... to keep deputies on the streets.'

- Rob Handy

On public safety:

Farr would like to see revenues stabilized for public safety. "Something needs to be looked at in terms of guaranteeing revenue for public safety in Lane County on an annual basis," he says. "People are being turned out of the jail every single night. They are turned out on 5th Street in Eugene and where do they go from there? Sometimes they go kill people. Sometimes they go rob people. They should be staying in jail. We need to make sure our jail's funded, the DA's office is funded, the sheriff's funded and very significantly that youth services are funded." He wouldn't say what county services he would sacrifice to maintain public safety, other than "all services are considered."

Handy says, "We try by every means possible to fund the most expensive service that Lane County provides." He cites his leadership in "initiating and passing a supplemental budget in March 2009 that backfilled some of the initial holes we had in community corrections, parole and probation, and in youth correctional services." Handy also takes credit for his role in working with ODOT to "right-size" the Coburg I-5 interchange project. "We saved Lane County \$1 million that we got back from ODOT that went to the road fund that is now being used, along with other road fund money, to keep deputies on the streets." Handy also sees support for social services now as a way to reduce the future need for prosecutors and jail beds.

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