

Rezoning and the Ward 1 Election

CANDIDATE COMPARISONS ARE NECESSARY AND PRUDENT

Ward 1 voters need to know the truth about the two run-off candidates, Emily Semple and Josh Skov. To do so, they should consider an objective and truthful comparison of where the candidates stand on several key issues.

Semple supports the city's Climate Recovery Ordinance, which puts forth a 2030 goal for the city to reduce our use of fossil fuels by 50 percent from 2010 levels. She is also a strong advocate of clean air and says EWEB's air-polluting Seneca Biomass plant may need to be reconsidered.

EWEB hired Skov's Good Company consulting firm to perform a sustainability analysis on Seneca's biomass plant. Good Company declared the plant's incinerator was "carbon neutral." EWEB subsequently gave the OK to Seneca's plant in 2007.

In 2010, *The Register-Guard* reported that the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency estimated that Seneca would release about 200,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year, which was almost that level in 2015. The director of the Green Power Institute in Berkeley, Gregory Morris, reportedly said, "... it is a fact that you'll get (release) more carbon dioxide per kilowatt hour out of a biomass plant than you do of a coal plant. That's true and it's always been true."

Skov disputed Morris' claim and rationalized his approval of the Seneca biomass as sustainable by saying that carbon is only effectively added to the atmosphere "when you dig stuff out of the ground, like coal," and burn it.

Semple supports the climate ordinance, sustainability and clean air. Skov, however, seems to have created his own brand of sustainability for profit by saying it's acceptable to burn organic material and pollute Eugene's atmosphere with carbon dioxide and fine particulate matter caused by combustion.

Semple opposes giving big developers millions of dollars' worth of tax breaks, known as the Multiple Unit Property Tax Exemption program (MUPTE). She also opposes the ongoing Urban Renewal District (URD). Both programs forfeit general fund revenue, which shortchanges basic services, such as library hours.

These forfeitures ultimately lead to more property tax levies, such as the 2015 library levy. More increases in property taxes makes housing less affordable. It also makes renting less affordable, because most tax increases are generally al-

ways passed on to renters.

Skov said in his June 15, 2015, R-G guest viewpoint that he supports the MUPTE program. Skov has not said if he supports or opposes the URD. His website only says he supports downtown redevelopment. One can only assume he supports an ongoing URD. Skov has said that his first councilor priority would be to address the affordable housing crises.

However, supporting the MUPTE program and URD will only forfeit general fund revenue, leading to higher property taxes, making housing *less* affordable, especially for low-income renters.

Semple opposed the South Willamette Special Area Zoning proposal (SW-SAZ), which would have forced rezoning low-density R1 neighborhoods, and jeopardized affordability and livability. Instead, Semple supports a community-driven planning process known as a "refinement plan," rather than a top-down city-forced plan.

Skov initially supported the SW-SAZ, without clarification, until four city-chartered neighborhood associations protested in outrage and the Eugene City Council finally withdrew the application. Subsequently Skov followed the city, and said at the May 15 City Club debate that the community will need to be "deeply involved," but he still hasn't qualified his position on rezoning R1 neighborhoods.

When Skov testified at the Sept. 19 Mayor's Forum on SW-SAZ, he spoke only in inconclusive generalities, seemingly taking care to conceal his position on the proposed refinement plan.

Up-zoning R1 neighborhoods has become a huge issue, and whatever is decided for the South Willamette area will be used as a "pilot program" for future city-wide growth plans. Before voting, voters absolutely need to know each candidate's position on rezoning of R1 neighborhoods.

Emily Semple has been clear on where she stands on these issues. A vote for Emily Semple would protect our air quality, take needed steps to make housing more affordable and ensure all livability aspects of R1 zoned neighborhoods are preserved. Join me in electing Emily as Ward 1 city councilor.

Brian Weaver is a 16-year property owner and resident of Ward 1 who works as an industrial electrician.

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