

ELECTION 2018

Candidates talk rentals, rabbits in Cannon Beach

Policy issues debated at election forum

By **BRENNA VISSER**
The Daily Astorian

CANNON BEACH — Candidates for City Council generally share a common vision: preserve the character and charm of Cannon Beach.

But when asked at an election forum Thursday night about how they would manage key issues which define that character — vacation rentals, parking and how to contain a growing bunny population — their views diverged.

City Councilor Mike Benefield, Greg Swedenborg, a hotelier and Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce board president, and Robin Risley, a real estate agent and planning commissioner, are vying for two seats on the council in November. Mayor Sam Steidel is running for his seat unopposed.

They were joined by state House District 32 candidates



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian
Mayor Sam Steidel speaks at a candidate forum.



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian
City Council candidates Mike Benefield, Robin Risley and Greg Swedenborg speak at an election forum.

Tiffany Mitchell, a Democrat, and Brian Halvorsen, an Independent. Republican Vineeta Lower was invited but did not attend. The forum was sponsored by The Daily Astorian.

On some issues, like the bunny infestation frustrating neighbors in Tolovana, candidates were equally stumped.

“But I think the problem lies in the eye of the beholder,” Benefield said. “You either love them or hate them.”

But on others, like regulating vacation rentals, the candi-

dates disagreed on approaches.

Benefield advocated for a proposal about to go before the Planning Commission that would eliminate the five-year rental permit that allows some homeowners nightly rentals.

“It’s putting a commercial business in a residential neighborhood,” he said.

Risley instead felt the city should do more to crack down on illegal rentals, which she believes will happen once the city hires a code enforcement officer.

Swedenborg, however, feels the number of rentals registered with the city is fair. Only about 30 homes have the five-year unlimited permit, and the revenue generated from those rentals benefits the city significantly, he said. Instead, he would propose raising the annual fee for the permit from \$350 to \$3,000 and suggest using the revenue to fund more affordable housing solutions.

“These houses we’re talking about are designed to

be rentals. We can’t turn back the clock on that,” Swedenborg said.

Candidates also differed on how they would address parking during the city’s peak tourism season.

“A flashing sign that says we’re full?” Benefield joked. “Unfortunately we’re a beautiful place, and the rest of the world is finding out. I’m not sure what to do about that.”

Benefield supports creating a shuttle system between town and the U.S. Highway

26 junction, as well as parking at South Wind. Risley leaned more toward creating a committee to study the issue, as well as leveraging underutilized parking lots at businesses like the Cannon Beach Community Church or banks while they are closed.

Swedenborg said he wasn’t sure of the solution, but advocated for paid parking in city-owned parking lots. By his estimates, the three lots could raise about \$500,000 a year to fund whatever option the council decides.

Mitchell and Halvorsen also chimed in about the impact of tourism in the region, saying each would work on the state level to rework the way lodging tax revenue gets distributed to cities.

“A lot of people already know we’re here,” Mitchell said. “So let’s cut back a little on promotion and reinvest in things like our roads, our schools ... which would not only be a benefit to the communities, but would ease the tax burden on those who live here.”

Governor moves to head off Trump on environmental regulations

Brown wants state protections

By **CLAIRE WITCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown wants to guard against a rollback of federal environmental rules by moving them into state law where the Trump administration couldn’t touch them.

Brown, a Democrat up for re-election next month, proposed legislation Wednesday that would have the state adopt all federal clean air and water standards as of Jan. 19, 2017 — the day before Donald Trump was inaugurated as president.

“As states, we can take a leadership role in preventing the erosion of core laws that protect our environment,” Brown said in remarks at an event at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. “Together, states must stand up to the Trump administration’s continuous attacks on our health and environment.”

Brown said that the Trump administration has already scaled back some rules that aim to keep the country’s air and water clean.

The administration has repealed or proposed elimination of about 46 regulations, according to Brown’s office,

citing the Harvard Environmental Law Program Regulatory Rollback Tracker.

These include fuel efficiency standards and regulations on mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants. Oregon has one such plant.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is also considering aspects of rules adopted in 2016 to require reduced emissions from public landfills. Landfills emit high levels of gases such as methane and carbon dioxide. Nationally, they are the third-largest source of anthropogenic methane emissions.

attack on clean air standards, clean water standards, and federal efforts to fight climate change,” Brown said. “In Oregon, that rollback stops now.”

Nikki Fisher, a spokeswoman for the governor, said in an email that there would be no expected additional cost to state government as a result.

Brown’s opponent, state Rep. Knute Buehler, R-Bend, said in response to the proposal that he too would “defend Oregon and our clean air and clean water.”

“As governor, if the Trump administration attempts to roll back rules that safeguard

with cleaner renewables like wind and solar.”

Buehler supported 2016 legislation that required Oregon to stop using coal-generated electricity by 2030. He also criticized Brown’s direction of the state Department of Environmental Quality, which regulates air and water.

In February 2017, Brown appointed Richard Whitman director of the agency. The previous director resigned in 2016 over a heavy metal air pollution scandal in Portland.

In January, state auditors found that backlogs in permits and inspections at the agency “endanger the state’s air quality and the health of Oregonians.”

“In addition to talking about federal environmental regulations, I would challenge Gov. Brown to fix her own DEQ which has been mired in chaos and turnover, failing to protect and enforce our state laws,” Buehler said.

A spokesman for Brown’s campaign, Christian Gaston, claimed in an email Thursday morning that Buehler was “lying.”

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group, Pamplin Media Group and Salem Reporter.

‘In Oregon, that rollback stops now.’

Gov. Kate Brown

Eight state attorneys general, including Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, sued the EPA over the proposed rollback in May “on behalf of (Oregon’s) citizens and residents to protect their health and well-being and to protect natural resources held in trust by the state.”

“It is widely assumed that the next wave of rollbacks will be to core safeguards of the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act,” according to Brown’s press release.

“Over the past two years Oregonians have witnessed an unprecedented and aggressive

Oregon’s environment, I will defend Oregon and our clean air and clean water,” Buehler said in a written statement. “I have shown this repeatedly by breaking with my party on this important issue. I opposed the president’s decision to remove the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement and broke with my party to replace coal energy in Oregon

Hawaiian Chieftain tours back on

The Daily Astorian

After being delayed because of emergency repairs, the tall ship Hawaiian Chieftain will offer sails and tours in Astoria as scheduled this weekend.

Grays Harbor Historical Seaport, the nonprofit that maintains both the Hawaiian Chieftain and a larger ship, the Lady Washington, had worried repairs to the Hawaiian Chieftain’s rig could take the ship out of the water for up to two weeks. They were prepared to postpone a journey

to California to make up for the lost sails, tours and educational programs in Astoria.

Now, the Hawaiian Chieftain will arrive at the Columbia River Maritime Museum’s dock Friday and will offer sails and tours on Saturday and Sunday.

The last time the group had to cancel a sail was due to weather, said Zachary Stocks, program development officer with Grays Harbor Historical Seaport.

“The only thing I can say is these are unexpected challenges,” Stocks said.

Astoria offers middle school tour

The Daily Astorian

The Astoria School District is hosting an open house on facility needs Monday at Astoria Middle School in advance of a \$70 million bond measure going to voters in November.

The district is asking voters for the bond to improve its five campuses. The centerpiece of its improvement plan is a nearly \$45 million modernization of Astoria Middle

School, including the reconstruction of a dated classroom wing into a three-story academic hall with identical learning communities on each floor. Support areas of the school would also be modernized, and the track resurfaced.

The open house from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Monday will include a campus tour and information session. The middle school is located at 1100 Klaskanine Ave.

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More info at coastradio.org
The event is a fundraiser for Coast Community Radio, donations at the door will be gratefully accepted

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