

Risley, Benefield prevail in Cannon Beach council race

Voters approve new fire levy

By **BRENNA VISSER**
The Daily Astorian

CANNON BEACH — Real estate agent Robin Risley and Cannon Beach City Councilor Mike Benefield overtook hotelier Greg Swedenborg for the two open seats on the City Council.

With most of the votes counted, Risley had the lead with 37.1 percent, and Benefield held off Swedenborg 32 percent to 29.2 percent.

Mayor Sam Steidel, who ran unopposed, won a second four-year term.

While amicable, the City Council race was notably more aggressive compared to recent years, with candidates bucking the trend of keeping local advertising and yard signs out of the campaign.

Much of the campaign was defined by the candidates shared goals of addressing workforce housing and financing large capital projects like City Hall and South Wind development, as well as the evergreen task of managing a tourism industry with local quality of life.

Benefield, who is returning for a second term, said he would focus on creating workforce housing, redirecting lodging tax dollars to go toward investing more in pub-

lic art and developing an event center at the old Cannon Beach Elementary School.

"I'm very happy to see the majority of our voters seem to appreciate the vision that I have and also Robin has ... We're very similar in that way," Benefield said. "I think it ought to be a good council to work with."

Risley, a longtime resident and real estate agent, is joining the council after three decades of public service on planning commissions, parks boards and the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce board. Risley's campaign largely focused on developing the Cannon Beach Elementary School property, housing, rebuilding City Hall, bolstering the arts and "preserving the character of Cannon Beach."

"I'm very excited and thrilled for the support," Risley said. "I can't thank everyone enough. I'm looking forward to making a difference."

A Cannon Beach native and co-owner of The Waves Oceanfront Lodging, Swedenborg ran to act as a voice for the business community and working families. In his first bid for public office, Swedenborg's campaign mainly centered around creating workforce housing, sustainable tourism and supporting paid parking initiatives, as well as a food and beverage tax to address congestion and infrastructure repairs.

"I strongly believe that in the voting population there are a ton of people who would elect here in 1999, 2000 — choose the year — and don't want it to change. Then I come with a platform about changing things — the food and beverage tax, parking ... that's a lot of change they don't want to see," he said. "You've heard of 'Cannon Beach' before? I think that motto holds true, and I don't think we're going to see a lot of change."

Swedenborg said overall his first bid for public office was positive and congratulated his opponents.

He intends to run again and Risley and Benefield should expect him to be "a usual suspect" at City Council meetings, he said.

Sixty percent of Cannon Beach voters also approved a five-year renewal of the fire levy Tuesday night, which pays for the fire chief's salary, vehicles, administrative costs and supplies. The levy will raise the tax rate to \$0.19 per thousand of assessed property value, up from an average \$0.14 voted in five years ago. The measure initially failed during a September special election due to low voter turnout.

"I am extremely happy the citizens of the fire district went out and voted to support having a fire chief for the next five years," Fire Chief Matt Benedict said. "The district needs a fire chief."

Balensifer elected Warrenton mayor

Prevails over Washington

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Mayor Henry Balensifer handily defeated challenger and Hammond resident John Washington on Tuesday.

Balensifer, communications manager for Lektro Inc., has served on the Planning Commission and was elected to the City Commission in 2012. He was appointed as mayor last year to serve out the remainder of former Mayor Mark Kujala's term after Kujala stepped down. He promised to run for election to the post this year.

Washington, a retired automotive technician and commercial truck driver, ran a door-to-door campaign with an emphasis on increased government transparency and a renewed focus on Hammond.

"I take this election to be a vote of confidence in the (City Commission's) direction and the goals it has set as well as

affirmation of the good work we've begun in the last two years since I took on the role of mayor," Balensifer said after earning 74 percent of the vote to Washington's 25.2 percent.

"It's been full steam ahead since I took over as mayor," he added. "And I don't expect the pace to stop."

The race was the first time Washington had pursued a public office and said it will likely be his last. He has no plans to be involved in city government now that the campaign is over.

"The people have spoken, and congratulations to him," Washington said. "Next time I see him, I'll shake his hand."

Housing, livability and economic development emerged as dominant themes during the campaign.

Washington was firm in his belief that the city could do more to promote the building of affordable and workforce housing, while Balensifer pointed often to steps the city has been taking to better understand its housing market. Balensifer chaired a committee for a countywide housing study.

Balensifer cited his proven track record within city government and his ability to cooperate with other commissioners. He has helped to push forward city ownership of the Hammond Marina, as well as revisit long-term planning documents to help guide future development. He has also held a number of town halls and community meetings to meet with citizens and discuss city issues and projects.

Washington, too, noted that the mayor is just one person on a five-member commission and cooperation with other members is key. He clashed with City Commissioner Rick Newton at a meeting in October, however, following an incident where Newton crashed a meet-and-greet Washington was hosting.

Newton disputed Washington's claims that the city wasn't doing enough to inform citizens or deal with ongoing issues like the elk herds that roam Warrenton and Hammond.

Newton, who was unopposed, won re-election to a second four-year term on Tuesday.

Barber keeps role as Seaside mayor

Rec expansion bond defeated

By **R.J. MARX**
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — "Let Seaside Keep Its Mayor," read the lawn signs throughout the city. Voters heard the request, as Mayor Jay Barber on Tuesday defeated challenger John Chapman, owner and operator of KSWB Productions LLC/Radio Clatsop.

Barber, a former city councilor who filled the vacant seat of the late former Mayor Don Larson in 2016, has lived in Seaside for 11 years. The former president of Warner Pacific University and pastor of a community church in Red Bluff, California, Barber and his wife, Jan, have four grown children and five grandsons.

With all members of the City Council returning next year, Barber seeks continuity to pursue projects already underway, including a \$15 million Seaside Civic and Convention Center remodel, urban renewal and providing city infrastructure to relocate schools outside the tsunami inundation zone.

"I really appreciate the faith the voters have expressed by

voting for me," Barber said after taking 60.1 percent of the vote to Chapman's 37.8 percent. "I look forward to working with our council, which stays intact as well for the next four years. We live in a great city, and we've got a future ahead. I'm honored to be able to serve."

City Council

City Councilors Steve Wright, Tita Montero and Dana Phillips each ran unopposed in Ward 1, Ward 2, and Ward 3 and 4.

Montero, a councilor since 2010, touted council accomplishments during the campaign, and cited the need for continued work on workforce housing, homelessness, city infrastructure, emergency preparedness and quality of life.

Phillips, elected in 2010, said she was proud of opportunities to assist residents when they have had issues and raised concerns, citing her advocacy for those seeking parking access for people with disabilities.

Wright moved from Gresham to Seaside in 2014. He worked 35 years for an international grain exporter, retiring as chief financial officer in 2013.

Rec bond defeated

Sixty-six percent of Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District voters gave a thumbs down to a \$20 million bond to expand the Broadway aquatic facility. The measure would have funded the expansion of district facilities and provided indoor recreation space at the Sunset Pool, opened in 1977. The tax rate for the bonds was 70 cents per \$1,000 in property value, or \$140 annually for a home with an assessed value of \$200,000.

On Tuesday night, Skyler Archibald, the rec district's executive director, said the organization has strived to meet the needs of residents and guests by providing high-quality recreation programs and facilities.

"While the results of Measure 4-196 are not what we were hoping for, we'll continue to work to meet those needs," Archibald said. "Throughout our process, we have repeatedly heard from our residents of the need for more indoor recreation space to increase community health and wellness. The district will be proactive in seeking out opportunities to provide that space both for the interim and for the perpetual future."

Bonamici cruises to victory

Democrat will serve in the majority

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Daily Astorian

U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici cruised to victory Tuesday over Republican challenger John Verbeek and Libertarian Drew Layda in the state's 1st Congressional District.

The district covers Clatsop, Columbia, Washington and Yamhill counties, along with a northwestern portion of Multnomah County. Democrats heavily outnumber Republicans and have long dominated.

"Now that the election is over, my hope is that members of Congress can work together to improve the

lives of all Oregonians and Americans," the congresswoman said in a statement after winning 63.5 percent of the vote. "I will continue to champion quality public education because educating our future leaders is a good investment. I'll continue to work to make higher education, housing and health care more accessible and affordable. I'll fight for a robust investment in infrastructure to boost our economy and create good jobs. And I will persist in my fight to protect the environment, preserve our natural resources, and safeguard public health."

Bonamici, a consumer protection attorney, has not faced a serious challenge since the Democrat defeated Republican Rob Cornilles in a 2012 special election to replace former Democratic Rep. David Wu. She will

get her first chance to serve in the majority after Democrats captured the House on Tuesday.

Her campaign committee has raised nearly \$1 million over the past two years. Neither Verbeek nor Layda have campaign committees.

Verbeek, a financial adviser, has previously run for the state Legislature and Metro regional government in Portland. Layda, who owns a diving equipment company in Portland, was backed by the Libertarian and Pacific Green parties.

Before Congress, Bonamici served two years each in the state House and Senate. Her committee assignments include Education and the Workforce and Science, Space and Technology. She is the co-chairwoman of caucuses around education, ocean health, estuaries and nursing.

Smith takes Gearhart council race

Voters also OK pot taxes

By **R.J. MARX**
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — City Councilor Kerry Smith won re-election on Tuesday night to Position 1, defeating challenger Jack Zimmerman.

"I would like to thank the voters of Gearhart for giving me the opportunity to represent them again," Smith said after winning 69.4 percent of the vote to Zimmerman's 29.3 percent. "I appreciate their faith in my work and what I have accomplished in the last four years. ... As we move forward, I renew my commitment to listening to my constituents and directing Gearhart in a positive direction."

Smith is an independent contractor and has lived in

Gearhart for 33 years. He started his own business 26 years ago and primarily has done home remodels in Gearhart and Seaside. He has served as a city councilor since 2014.

Smith has called a new fire station the city's most important concern. The existing fire station, built in 1958 and liable to collapse and flood during a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami, is the topic of years of conversation.

City Councilor Paulina Cockrum, who was unopposed, won re-election to Position 3.

Cockrum, a Gearhart resident since 1976, served on the Planning Commission before her appointment to the council in 2015. Her goal is to "practice stewardship and work to make Gearhart a better place when I leave than when I started."

Pot taxes

Gearhart voters approved a 3 percent tax on marijuana sales.

Gearhart was among a few cities to vote in a tax prior to the legalization of recreational cannabis. In 2014, shortly before state voters approved Measure 91, the city passed an ordinance requiring a 10 percent tax on the sale of recreational marijuana and a 5 percent tax for a medical marijuana registry cardholder.

The city sought to reduce the tax to keep it line with other cities on the North Coast.

County voters on Tuesday also approved a 3 percent tax on marijuana sales.



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John Horvick

Vice President and Political Directory at DHM Research

John regularly presents to the public officials, boards of directors, nonprofit groups and regional and national conferences, including Portland Business Alliance, Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, and Oregon Society of American Foresters. John's insights and commentary for DHM, can often be found in local media such as OPB, the Pamplin Media Group, the Oregonian, the Willamette Week, as well as in various national publications.

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