

District 2: Experience, transparency have emerged as election issues

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‘Experience is going to help’

“I know things are going to be different now to some degree,” Nebeker said. “And we don’t know exactly how much. But I think that experience is going to help.”

“Because somebody new coming onto the commission, especially somebody who doesn’t have any prior government experience — in the midst of this — I think it’s going to be really tough. I think it will be tough for the commission, and I think it will be tough for them individually.”

Nebeker said she has believed in civic engagement since she was a teenager. She served on the Gearhart Planning Commission for 25 years before her election to the county commission.

“I’ve just committed to doing things that I think will help people, that will make things better,” she said. “That’s kind of who I am.”

Nebeker, who has managed art and real estate properties, was married to the late painter, Royal Nebeker.

While serving on the commission, she has been a strong supporter of funding for the arts and social services.

She started the Arts Council of Clatsop County, which she believes has helped nonprofits receive grant funding and increase the economic impact of the local arts and culture sector. She believes the council has also helped educate people about the importance and value of art.

Nebeker has been a supporter of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, the county’s mental health contractor, along with the county’s needle exchange and other outreach designed to combat substance abuse and address mental health issues.

She also believes she played a role in the success of the crisis respite center in Warrenton, which is in the process of being purchased by Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare.

“I have formed strong liaisons with those on health and human services, and we’ve been able to get some phenomenal things done,” she said. “It’s never going to be enough — there’s always going to be people who are at risk, there’s always going to be mental health issues. But I’ve been able to work so well with people who are in our public health and

mental health to improve things.”

Nebeker is also proud of her decision to appoint Larry Taylor, a longtime Democratic Party activist, as parliamentarian to help advise her on how to run board meetings when she led the commission as chairwoman last year.

Although the appointment was met with some resistance from other commissioners, she believes the training the parliamentarian provided helped keep the focus of conversations on the issues. She credits the training for making board meetings more efficient and improving communication between commissioners.

‘A different culture’

Toyooka believes more work needs to be done to increase transparency and cooperation on the board.

“If I have any influence, if elected, on creating a different culture, one of more cooperation than adversarial would benefit all,” he said.

During his career in the U.S. Marine Corps, Toyooka said he learned how to unite for a common cause. He believes he can be helpful in handling issues in a more collaborative, efficient and effective way.

While he has no government experience, he has served on the foundation boards of Clatsop Community College and Providence Seaside Hospital.

“I can be very objective,” he said. “And I don’t represent any agenda or any special interest.”

“I’m very much of interest of the people of Clatsop County. I believe in forestry, farming, fishing, business, tourism, arts — I believe that it all works together. I don’t think we should weigh one heavier than the other. They all have to work in harmony.”

Toyooka, the manager of Lum’s Auto Center, lives in Gearhart and is married to Lori Lum, the general manager and part of the family that owns the dealership. He said success and economic development in all sectors is important in providing the tax base to fund programs, services and infrastructure improvements.

Toyooka has opposed cap-and-trade legislation in Salem because he believes it lacks transparency and guidance on how it would be implemented.

Although county commissioners do not have a direct policy role over cap

and trade, he believes a unified voice from the county can influence state decisions. More than two dozen counties in Oregon opposed a cap-and-trade bill this year.

Commissioner Mark Kujala and Commissioner Lianne Thompson wrote letters in opposition to the bill, but the other commissioners, including Nebeker, did not take a position.

Nebeker said she did not see a reason to sign a letter in support or opposition since the county is not involved in the decision in Salem.

Toyooka has also criticized Nebeker for her vote in 2017 to opt Clatsop County out of the \$1 billion class-action lawsuit against the state over timber harvests. Commissioners voted 3-2 after the majority concluded the lawsuit did not align with their values for balanced forest management.

Clatsop was the only eligible timber county to opt out. The counties won in Linn County Circuit Court last year, but the state plans to appeal.

Nebeker said she stands by her vote.

“I’m a taxpayer and I could not get beyond seeing that all we would be doing is taking money out of one pocket and putting it in another, except in between, we would be giving a big chunk to the attorneys,” she said. “We live in the state, we pay taxes to the state.”

Nebeker said if the state has to pay the counties it will be detrimental to taxpayers.

“It isn’t free money that I can see,” she said. “It’s going to come from somewhere, and either it will increase our taxes or diminish our services because the state will not have that kind of money to pay out.”

Nebeker has been endorsed for a third, four-year term by Indivisible North Coast Oregon, a progressive group, and has received campaign contributions from Clatsop Citizens for Good Government.

Toyooka has been endorsed by Gearhart Mayor Matt Brown, the United Steelworkers Local 1097, Kurt Englund of Englund Marine & Industrial Supply and North Coast First PAC. He has received campaign contributions from North Coast First PAC and the Oregon Automobile Dealers Association PAC.

District 4: Candidates cite housing, child care and broadband as issues

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shortage and major projects like a new county jail in Warrenton and moving critical infrastructure outside the tsunami inundation zone.

‘We are following the virus’

Sullivan, a former hotel office manager, building manager and teacher who served on Astoria’s budget committee, was uncontested when she was elected in 2016. She was selected by the board in January as chairwoman.

“There are so many essential services we are responsible for,” she said. “I think our biggest focus needs to be right now, how do we manage through the COVID-19? How do we maintain a healthy budget so we can keep the staff available to provide the essential services?”

“We are making estimates of what we have to plan for. And so, we just have to stay on top of it and adjust as the virus adjusts. We are following the virus,” she said.

“I think our county staff and our local community partners and ... the cities and the state ... are doing a great job. They’re doing a really terrific job in a very tough situation,” she said. “And I have confidence in them and I’m very proud about how well we’re working together to coordinate even something like opening or closing the parks — that affects a lot of people.”

“But it’s important that we all keep talking to each other and keep making decisions based on public health first, public safety first.”

Once the coronavirus crisis has stabilized, Sullivan said she is looking forward to turning the board’s attention back to addressing issues like affordable housing, broadband expansion and child care.

Her priorities include advocating for local businesses, increasing the supply of affordable housing and strengthening the health and well-being of residents.

She said she also wants to continue advocating for a balanced approach to forestry management and supporting healthy watersheds.

“Out here on the Northwest, our watersheds are intricately linked to forests,” Sullivan said. “And we depend on our watersheds for clean drinking water and the streams that are the habitat for the fish — I mean it all has to be connected — it has to be a balanced picture. It can’t be just one value. It can’t just be for money.”

Sullivan stands by her vote in 2017 to opt Clatsop County out of the \$1 billion lawsuit against the state over timber harvests. The 3-2 vote came after the majority found the lawsuit did not align with their values for balanced forest management. Clatsop was the only eligible timber county not to join the suit.

The counties prevailed in Linn County Circuit Court last year, but the state plans to appeal.

Sullivan believes suing the state will ultimately hurt taxpayers.

“And I think we have to think for the generations ahead,” she said. “We want our forests to be there now and into the future. And that includes the jobs that are connected with managing the forests.”

Bangs argues that Sullivan’s vote deprived the county of a voice in the litigation.

She has also faulted Sullivan for not opposing cap-and-trade legislation in Salem. Commissioner Mark Kujala and Commissioner Lianne Thompson wrote letters against the bill this year, joining more than two dozen counties statewide, but the board chose not to take a position.

Sullivan said she didn’t take a position on cap and trade this year because it was not an issue before the board.

‘No regard for consequences’

Bangs’ criticism of Sullivan on timber and cap and trade defined the beginning of her campaign. But she said her concerns extend well beyond those statewide issues.

“What it really was is I was noticing decisions were being made with little or no regard for consequences it would have on our community, jobs and our economy,” she said.

“Those topics are what got me into the process of

running for a political position. But once I committed to the process, I saw so many other situations that haven’t been changed over the last four years,” said Bangs, who has no government experience.

“I just think the focus got lost,” she said, referring to internal strife on the board and turnover of county managers.

Bangs said she would like to see more transparency and communication from the board.

“I feel people should vote for me because I am a working mom. I’m actually not doing this as a political career move,” the mother of three said. “I’m doing this to represent the people in my area. I feel like that will bring a fresh and new perspective to our county politics.”

“I’ve lived so many of what I see are current county issues personally.”

Bangs said issues like the lack of child care and inadequate access to high-speed internet have affected her family.

“Some of the leanest years that we’ve had are when I couldn’t find child care and we decided I would go into a temporary retirement until the kids were older,” she said.

“So, I feel like I offer personal experience, I offer the passion and I offer the drive, the heart to get things done. I just have a deep conviction to stand up for our working families, because that’s what we are, we’re a working family.”

Bangs believes homelessness and housing need more attention. “We have so many young people moving back, or trying to move back, but they have nowhere to live,” she said.

She said limited housing makes it hard to hire and retain professionals and people starting entry-level positions. Her vision is to help create affordable housing through the development of fourplexes or duplexes.

“To be able to bring that tax base into our own local area and be able to utilize it for our school districts would be amazing,” she said.

“I feel like I have a lot of emotional investment into the success of our community and the success of our school district and seeing Clatsop County thrive.”

Virus: Reopening plans still developing

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County officials are preparing a plan for the first phase of reopening the economy under the framework outlined by Gov. Kate Brown.

The county will share the plan with cities and other partners prior to submitting it to the state for review and approval.

Testing capacity is the only area where the county is hoping to see greater capability. But officials are hopeful they will have adequate supplies to move forward.

The county has received an additional 500 testing kits from the state and is continuing to request more.

In order to have adequate testing as defined by the state, the Public Health Department said the county needs to be able to test about 140 people a week. Last week, the county tested about 91 people, said Ellen Heinitz, a naturopathic physician with the department, on a Facebook Live event Friday.

While Brown’s stay-at-home order is still in effect, some activities are returning.

Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria announced Friday that it will resume elective surgeries and other nonemergency procedures.

Brown had imposed a ban on the procedures to preserve masks, gowns and gloves to treat virus patients, but lifted it as supplies improved.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife said Friday that people from out of state can fish and hunt in Oregon again starting on Tuesday. Salmon and steelhead fishing will also reopen on the Columbia River.

Restrictions will remain in place for recreational clamming and crabbing. The state imposed the restrictions in April over concerns that visitors had the potential to overwhelm resources on the coast and other popular destinations.

Brown said at a press conference on Friday that she hopes some rural areas with few or no COVID-19 cases could reopen for business and other activities on May 15.

Reopening plans for urban areas and other counties with more than five cases of the disease are still being developed, the governor said.

“We’re not going to be able to reopen Oregon quickly or in one fell swoop,” Brown said, adding that Oregonians will still need to maintain physical distancing, wear masks in public and follow other precautions to prevent spread-

ing the virus.

“Hand-shaking is probably out the window for a long time.”

The governor previously said counties must have state-approved plans for reopening their economy, and several counties have submitted such plans.

On Friday, Brown announced what she said was a thorough strategy to diagnose those who are sick and to determine regions where the coronavirus might be hiding.

Testing should be available throughout Oregon to anyone who displays virus symptoms and to people in nursing homes, farmworker housing, prisons and other group living situations where the disease is suspected.

Public health officials will trace who came in contact with infected individuals. Anyone who did so will be asked to self-quarantine at home for 14 days.

In addition, Oregon Health & Science University will launch a yearlong study in which 100,000 people are selected and asked to volunteer for daily monitoring. Participants will be selected at random from Oregon households.

Dick Hughes of the Oregon Capital Bureau contributed to this report.

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