

Voters approve tax levies

Money to finance county fairgrounds, Cannon Beach fire

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Voters on Tuesday approved ballot measures to increase funding for the Clatsop County Fairgrounds and the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District.

Fifty-six percent of voters favored renewing and increasing a five-year tax levy for the fairgrounds. Fifty-nine percent of voters backed the new tax levy for the fire district.

"I am excited and thankful for the voters to have confidence in the district," Cannon Beach Fire Chief Marc Reckmann said in a text message. "This is a hard time for everyone so passing the levy during this time is very exciting for the district."

The fire district asked voters to approve a five-year levy for 35 cents per \$1,000 in assessed property value to help sustain operations by hiring a second commanding officer and replacing equipment.

The new tax will bring in between \$403,000 to \$454,000 a year.

Call volume has increased and volunteer firefighters have become harder to come by, making it necessary to hire personnel. And the stress on fire chiefs in Cannon Beach has resulted in turnover.

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The fire district has a permanent tax rate of 35 cents per \$1,000. On top of that, voters have approved a five-year levy to support the fire chief's position for 19 cents per \$1,000 and a five-year bond for a ladder truck at 9 cents per \$1,000.

The total tax with the new levy will increase from 63 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value to 98 cents, or about \$141 a year for a home valued at \$400,000.

The Clatsop County Fairgrounds has been financially impacted by the cancellation of the Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival, the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival and the Clatsop County Fair.

With the financial hit from the cancellations, the levy became even more vital for the future of the fairgrounds.

John Lewis, who took over as operations manager in 2018, has taken the lead in completing deferred maintenance, improving the fairgrounds and expanding events.

The increase to 7 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value — up from 5 cents — will continue to fund operations and maintenance while staying even with increasing costs.

Taxpayers will pay about \$21 more a year for a home valued at \$300,000. The tax rate will generate between \$471,000 and \$530,000 a year.

"We're obviously pleased with the results of the levy, and we can certainly use the extra funds to move forward with the fairgrounds and keep up with the rising costs. And partially make up for all the events we've been missing now this year from the COVID crisis," said Mike Autio, the chairman of the Fair Board.

"It's hard to know what will happen with this whole crisis affecting the economy and people out of jobs in the county. But we're grateful that they all came out and we had a good voter turnout and there was strong support."

Commission: Challengers said they could bring fresh perspectives

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The challengers also made cap and trade and the county's decision to opt out of a \$1 billion lawsuit against the state over timber harvests issues in their campaigns. Sullivan and Nebeker took no position on the cap-and-trade legislation in Salem and had voted in 2017 to opt out of the timber suit.

Sullivan, a former hotel office manager, building manager and teacher, ran uncontested when she was elected in 2016. She was selected by the board in January as chairwoman.

Sullivan said she is proud of the campaign she ran and thanked all her supporters.

"As I finish the remainder of my term as county commissioner for District 4, I will continue working for the people of Clatsop County," she said. "I believe that the people of our district and our county

share core values. I believe that we can and will move forward, working together to improve the quality of life in our communities."

"I am honored to have been given the opportunity to serve. After my term as county commissioner ends, I will stay involved with the many important issues challenging all of us. I love this special part of the world. It is my home."

Nebeker, a business manager active in the arts, was first elected in 2012 and reelected in 2016. She served as chairwoman of the board last year and was chosen vice chairwoman this year.

Both incumbents were endorsed by Clatsop County Democrats and Indivisible North Coast Oregon.

They both said their experience on the board would be crucial in helping the county move through the coronavirus

pandemic while continuing to address priorities like housing, mental health, child care and the new jail.

The challengers said they could bring fresh perspectives to the board and better prioritize local issues, particularly around natural resources.

Toyooka's campaign focused on overall economic development and support for businesses.

Bangs focused on supporting working families. She also prioritized child care, broadband access and housing as key issues.

While the county commission is nonpartisan, victories by Bangs and Toyooka shift the ideological balance on the board toward a more conservative direction.



House: 'We need to fight against cap and trade'

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"I'm happy with the results," Weber said Tuesday night. "We'll start tomorrow, my team and I, on working on our priorities for November and for the race. But right now, I'm going to focus on bringing common sense back to Salem — our common sense, our North Oregon Coast common sense — and protecting our farming, and our forests and our fisheries to the utmost."

Mitchell was criticized over her support of controversial legislation to cap the carbon emissions of large industrial polluters and make them buy mitigation credits, the proceeds of which would be invested in climate-friendly initiatives.

Weber has made defeating cap and trade her top priority and said Tuesday night that the coronavirus pandemic makes it all the more important.

"We need to fight against cap and trade because of preserving our small businesses and preserving the ability of our small businesses on the coast to receive goods and to keep the prices that we have fair," she said. "And all of that has to be measured by taking that cap and trade off the playing field."

Her contributions include

\$3,000 from Hampton Lumber and \$1,500 each from the #TimberUnity PAC, the North Coast First PAC and Koch Industries. Koch Industries is the owner of the Georgia-Pacific Wauna Mill, which would have faced emissions regulation under the proposed cap-and-trade bill.

Weber has also taken aim at the Student Success Act, financed by a corporate activity tax to support education reforms she believes need to be voided.

Lower congratulated Weber on the win and said she would support her in November as Republicans try to take back the district.

"We need to work together, and we need to get out and vote," she said. "I think that's probably been our biggest downfall is that, historically, we haven't voted."

Boothe-Schmidt, who is also a board member with the Sunset Empire Transportation District, was hand-picked by state House Democrats to replace Mitchell. She has amassed more than \$65,000 in campaign contributions, largely from labor unions.

More than \$43,000 of Boothe-Schmidt's contributions have come from her union, the American Federation of State, County

and Municipal Employees. Kiepke gathered just under \$3,000 in contributions.

"I'm excited about the win," Boothe-Schmidt said. "I'm excited to get started on the general election. I'm very grateful to everybody's help I had during the primary, all the volunteers and my team."

Boothe-Schmidt has focused her campaign on fighting for better wages, safer working conditions and affordable health care. She has said she believes in climate change, but has been fairly noncommittal about how she would vote on cap-and-trade legislation that has dominated the past two legislative sessions.

"If we can do something to change the climate, we need to do it," she said Tuesday night. "But we need to make sure we keep the jobs, the living wage jobs we have, or have new jobs in place before the old jobs go away."

Kiepke conceded Wednesday that he could not win without the endorsement of major labor unions, who he interviewed with during the campaign. But he said his political aspirations are not over.

"All this did was ignite a fire inside me, and I'm going to make a difference," he said.

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