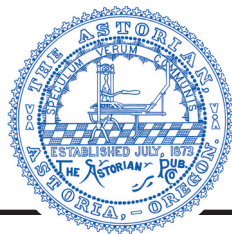


# OPINION



# the Astorian

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## OUR VIEW

# Choices for college board, park district

Slates of candidates have emerged for the boards at Clatsop Community College and the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District in the May 18 election.

At the college, the issues are an enrollment decline during the coronavirus pandemic and a problematic computer software system. At the park district, there is backlash over the purchase of the old Broadway Middle School in Seaside.

But since the primary responsibilities of these boards is to supervise top administrators, the futures of Chris Breitmeyer, the college president, and Skyler Archibald, the park district's executive director, are part of the conversations.

In our political endorsements in 2020, we reset our view of nonpartisan local boards and commissions.

We prefer these boards to function more like juries: open-minded, objective and drawn from a cross section of our community.

We are looking for thoughtful, well-rounded people who can help guide our institutions. Shepherds, not activists.

So we are skeptical of slates.

Organizing a slate makes sense when a board is dysfunctional, hopelessly off track on policy or on the cusp of a significant decision that has divided public opinion. Otherwise, we think voters should be careful about granting power without knowing exactly how it will be used.

We are encouraged, however, by the quality of candidates for the college and the park district. Most have the kinds of backgrounds, experience and skill sets that are valuable in these roles.

## ENDORSEMENTS

### Clatsop Community College Board of Education

- **Zone 2, Position 2** (four-year term): Sara Meyer\*
- **Zone 2, Position 3** (four-year term): Robert Duehmig\*
- **Zone 3, Position 6** (two-year term): Suzanne Iverson

### Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors

- **Position 1** (four-year term): Su Coddington\*
- **Position 2** (four-year term): Celeste Bodner\*
- **Position 3** (four-year term): Patrick Duhachek
- **Position 4** (two-year term): Erika Marshall Hamer\*
- **Position 5** (two-year term): Katharine Parker\*

\*Denotes incumbent

## COLLEGE BOARD

Clatsop Community College, like other community colleges in Oregon, experienced an enrollment decline during the pandemic.

The decline has been complicated by a computer software system, CampusNexus, that has frustrated faculty and students.

There are rumblings about low faculty morale and a lack of urgency from Breitmeyer and the college board to take decisive action to improve enrollment and resolve the software dilemma.

Tim Lyman, who was elected to the college board as a write-in candidate in 2019 after no one filed for the position by the deadline, recruited three candidates to challenge board incumbents. If all three win, they could help form a majority on the seven-member board.

We think the challengers have raised legitimate questions about the management of the college. But they have not identified what Breitmeyer and the board should have done differently to stem the enrollment decline or fix CampusNexus sooner. More importantly, they have not said precisely what they would do if they are in the majority after the election.

• **Zone 2, Position 2:** Elected in 2019, Sara Meyer is running for a four-year term. The retiree worked at Tongue Point Job Corps Center and, with her husband, operated The Compleat Photographer in Astoria. She previously served on the college board two decades ago.

Patrick Preston, the challenger, is a retired veterans employment representative and military veteran.

We endorse Meyer.

• **Zone 2, Position 3:** Appointed in 2014 and first elected in 2015, Robert Duehmig, the board chairman, is running for a four-year term.

Duehmig is the interim director of the Oregon Office of Rural Health. He has experience in health care, education, labor, government relations and congressional politics.

Trudy Van Dusen Citovic, the challenger, is the co-owner of Van Dusen Beverages, the owner of Fire Station Yoga and the co-owner of The Rosebriar in Astoria. Her father, Willis Van Dusen, was the longest-serving mayor of Astoria.

Our local boards and commissions are often weighted toward retirees. We are hopeful more people like Duehmig and Van Dusen Citovic will step forward to serve.

We would have preferred to have them both on the board, but as they're competing for the same seat, we endorse Duehmig for his more extensive policy background.

• **Zone 3, Position 6:** Appointed in 2019, David Zunkel, a retired physician who practiced in Washington state, is running for an unexpired two-year term. Zunkel has served on the college foundation board and led ENCORE (Exploring New Concepts of Retirement Education), which promotes lifelong learning for people 50 and over.

Suzanne Iverson, the challenger, is a retiree who worked for 18 years at the college in community education and workforce training. We think Iverson would bring a unique historical perspective and an emphasis on strengthening links between the college and regional businesses.

We endorse Iverson.

### ZONE 2, POSITION 2: SARA MEYER



### ZONE 2, POSITION 3: ROBERT DUEHMIG



### ZONE 3, POSITION 6: SUZANNE IVERSON



## PARK DISTRICT BOARD

Roiled by allegations of financial and personal misconduct, the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors experienced upheaval and resignations over the past few years.

The turnover created an election where all five seats on the board are on the ballot at the same time. Four of the board members were appointed.

The challengers mobilized over the board's decision to purchase the old Broadway Middle School in January for \$2.15 million.

With financing spread over two decades, the board sees the purchase as a bold move to secure prime space for recreation and child care. But the middle school, located in the tsunami inundation zone, has maintenance obstacles that could burden the park district.

We may discover in a few years that the purchase was a mistake. That doesn't mean Archibald and the board were reckless.

The challengers are right to call for more transparency about the condition of the property and to insist on a full public vetting of potential uses. But many of the arguments about the middle school during the campaign have been overcooked.

The challengers have not provided a clear vision for what they would do if they win the majority. Instead of looking backward — and trying to punish board members for a reasonable decision — we hope voters look forward.

• **Position 1:** Appointed in 2020, Su Coddington, a nurse, is running for a four-year term.

Al Hernandez, the challenger, is a retired accountant whose public finance roles included the Sunset Empire Transportation District.

We endorse Coddington, but we think Hernandez should stay involved as a budget watchdog.

• **Position 2:** Appointed in 2020, Celeste Bodner, the executive director of FosterClub, a national network for young people in foster care, is running for a four-year term.

John Huisman, the challenger, is a retiree in sales, marketing and management who has been a champion of improving Sunset Pool.

We endorse Bodner.

• **Position 3:** Elected in 2001, Michael Hinton, a contractor with a fine arts background, is running for a four-year term.

Patrick Duhachek, the challenger, is a former U.S. Navy aircraft maintenance officer and private sector project manager and logistics engineer who owns Wheel Fun Rentals.

We respect Hinton's commitment to the park district, his institutional memory and the continuity he has brought to the board during a time of turmoil.

But a thriving board needs diversity of opinion. Among the challengers, we believe Duhachek, who has served on the park district's budget committee, is best suited to act as a check on the middle school and other projects.

We endorse Duhachek.

• **Position 4:** Appointed in 2020, Erika Marshall Hamer, the director of global human resources for Mercy Corps, is running for an unexpired two-year term.

Jackie Evans, the challenger, retired after management roles at Fred Meyer Jewelers.

We endorse Marshall Hamer, but the park district could benefit from Evans' management and fundraising insight.

• **Position 5:** Appointed in 2019, Katharine Parker, the board's president, is the head secretary at Seaside High School. She is running for an unexpired two-year term.

Stephen Morrison, the challenger, retired after management roles at trucking companies.

We endorse Parker.

### POSITION 1: SU CODDINGTON



### POSITION 2: CELESTE BODNER



### POSITION 3: PATRICK DUHACHEK



### POSITION 4: ERIKA MARSHALL HAMER



### POSITION 5: KATHARINE PARKER

