

Meet the 2016 primary candidates

Blue Mountain Eagle

On April 1, the Blue Mountain Eagle sent each candidate in the May primary a certified letter with identical instructions and questions to answer for free publication in this edition.

The candidates were informed in the letter of the deadline, and each responded in time. The candidates were also informed they could include a photo, if they desired, but not all candidates submitted photos.

In alphabetical order for each position, the following are the unedited, verbatim responses received to these questions:

1. Please describe the office for which you are running and its importance. (50 words or less)

2. Why are you running for this office? (50 words or less)

3. What is your background, and what qualifications and experience would you bring to this office? (200 words or less)

4. What issues would you like to address, and how would you do so? (200 words or less)

COUNTY COMMISSIONER NO. 2

Jim Hamsher

1. The commissioner position is an opportunity to pull everyone together for the greater good. Mayoral experience proved maintaining good relationships and conflict resolution is achievable. Overall management of Grant County and delivery of services to citizens is work I am prepared to do.

2. Our residents cannot afford the status quo. Our way of life is in jeopardy. Wise and frugal government is a must. We need to keep regulations, taxation, and litigation to a minimum. I will work to improve the economy for all the towns in our County.

3. Currently Mayor of Prairie City

Former Prairie City Councilman

Former Prairie City Mayor
Prairie City Budget Committee, 5 years

GREAT Board member

Former Chairperson
League of Oregon Cities: Small Cities Council.

Former President of the Grant County

NPRA Rodeo Committee

Current Grant County Rodeo

Committee Chairperson

For the last eight months, weekly deliveries of hay to animals dispossessed of their feed by the fire. Over 1000 tons of hay has been donated through this project.

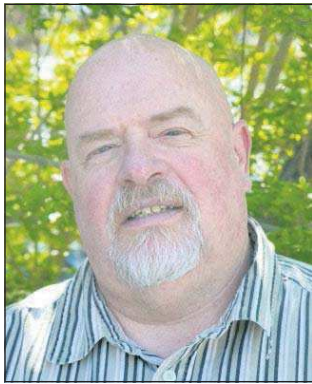
4. Public lands need to be managed for multiple uses including grazing, logging and recreation. Access, for senior citizens, disabled people, all users, needs to be maintained. I feel forest policy needs to be updated using information gleaned over the last 25 years. This policy is being dictated by those who are out of touch with what is happening in our county. Better forest management requires a much stronger local voice. I think we all can agree that nobody wants the kind of devastating forest fires we have seen in the past. I love our county and I want to see it prosper.

Chris Labhart

1. My name is Chris Labhart and I am running for re-election to the position of Grant County Commissioner, position #2. Along with the County Judge, we are responsible for all executive and legislative matters within Grant County.

2. I believe I bring experience, knowledge and leadership to the County Court. This Court is able to discuss new ideas and differing opinions, and this ensures that decisions made by a body that works together, benefits all people of Grant County. Making tough decisions is not easy.

3. I have lived in Grant County most of my life and know the customs and culture that are unique to our way of life. I have worked in both the public and private sectors of



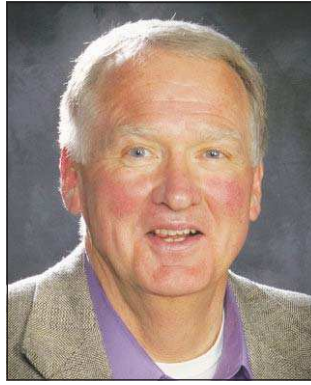
Doug Carpenter



Jim Hamsher



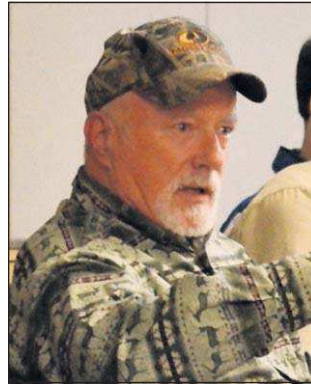
Julie Ellison



Chris Labhart



Tandi Merkord



Jim Boethin



Mary Weaver

our economy. I have served on the City Council of both Canyon City and John Day as a councilor and mayor. I was elected to the ESD and Blue Mountain Hospital District boards. I presently serve on the Local Community Advisory Council and the 12 County Regional Community Advisory Council, of which I chaired twice. I presently serve on the Association of Oregon Counties Steering Committees for Veterans, Public Lands and Natural Resources and Legislative issues. I was appointed to the Health Evidence Revision Commission by the Governor. I am the only representative from Eastern Oregon. I worked to bring Air Life of Oregon and New Hope for Eastern Oregon to Grant County and worked to build the Grant County Regional Airport Industrial Park. I am a County College graduate, class of 2013. I volunteer as an Oregon Hunter Safety instructor, Red Cross Disaster Assistance Team member and Department of Veterans Affairs driver to Burns and Boise.

4. The issues that I believe affect our county are many. Job retention and creation, Veterans, Health Care and senior programs are tops on my list. We must ensure Grant County retains the jobs we already have. Infrastructure improvements; from schools, streets and bridges, recreation opportunities, stewardship contracts and health care facilities are but a few of the things that will help keep the jobs we already have. We must work with our federal, state and local agencies to provide a positive and safe working environment for their employees. Ensuring our veterans have the information and access to the benefits they have earned and deserve should be everyone's goal. A county funded Veterans Service Officer is an important step to ensure our veterans are served. Quality and affordable health care is critical to our county. When someone wants to move to an area, they always look into access to health care. A county supported hospital district, health department and a school based health clinic have helped. Over 25% of Grant Counties population is citizens age 65 and over. We must provide a wide variety of services to our seniors.

TREASURER

Doug Carpenter

1. The duties of the Grant County Treasurer's office are to receive and safely keep, budget, and record the revenues and other public monies of the County, to distribute the monies collected to the proper recipients, and to pay the County's bills as directed by the Grant County Commissioners.

2. My motivation for seeking the office of Grant County Treasurer is to serve the people of Grant County to the highest standards of my ability. I believe my leadership skills, knowledge of fiscal management, my dedication to the job and responsibilities, qualify me to serve as Treasurer of Grant County.

3. I have more than 10

years experience in accounting and finance. Eight years with Intuit Inc., assisting large and small companies with budgets, financial reports, bank reconciliations, and more. I have also worked for H&R Block, and I'm currently with Malheur Lumber Company, doing Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable.

I am knowledgeable and experienced with computers, DOS, Microsoft Office Suite, WordPerfect Office Suite, QuickBooks, Microsoft Dynamics GP, and several different accounting programs.

I have good communication, and organizational skills, use good judgment, am able to think on my feet and adapt to changing situations. I am self-motivated and work well as a team member.

My family moved to Grant County in 1973. I went to school and worked in the mills here. I left for college, employment, and to assist with the care for my invalid mother-in-law. My wife Darla and I moved back here, after her mother passed away in 2013. Most of my family is here, including my two kids and grandkids.

I love Grant County and am proud to call it home.

4. I would like to continue the exceptional job Kathy Smith has done during her tenure as treasurer.

Transparency, integrity, stewardship, and financial stability, are the attributes I'd like to bring to the job when I'm elected County Treasurer.

Julie Ellison

1. The county treasurer is responsible for receiving, dispersing, and investing all monies belonging to the county according to Oregon statutes. The three most important investment priorities of the treasurer should be to:

(A.) Protect the principal.
(B.) Keep monies available for dispersing (i.e. liquidity).
(C.) Manage the interest rate.

2. As a trust-worthy citizen of Grant County, I'm running for this position for two reasons. First, I offer unique capabilities and insight due to my hands-on-experience with our current treasurer. Second, I'm dedicated to committing the remainder of my career (16 years) to maintaining and enhancing a solid financial foundation.

3. I currently work as the Deputy Clerk in the Grant County Clerk's Office. Raised in Grant County, I began my career working as a bookkeeper for Jackson Oil (26 years) and Ed Staub & Sons (4 years). During this time I gained years of direct experience dealing with all aspects of accounting and finance.

Working as the Deputy Clerk, alongside our current treasurer, Kathy Smith, to pay the county's bills, I receive, review, and provide budgeting oversight all while ensuring expenses are processed as budget law requires. I also maintain capital outlay purchases in our county's AS-400 computer system for annual audit review. Working with Kathy has pro-

vided me with unique insight and hands-on experience with the county's accounts payable process.

I also serve as Treasurer to Lutheran's Women's Missionary League and as a Director on the Mid-County Cemetery Board. I'm also dedicated to our county's annual community fundraiser for CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates).

I believe that working as your treasurer would be the perfect culmination to my career. Please allow me to offer my proven work experience, talent, and drive to help our county adequately plan for and take on the challenges of future growth within the county.

4. As your Treasurer, I'll immediately place a strong focus on deciphering how the recent decrease in federal and state funds directly impacts our county's financial state. I'll then determine what steps can and should be taken to counteract this impending loss.

While doing so, I'll work alongside our county commissioners and judge to ensure that priorities are being properly set to protect the services most desired while maintaining an optimal financial balance. The importance of strong and honest communication between the various departments cannot be understated.

I also believe that it has never been more important to embrace improvements in technology. Whether you love or despise computers, one cannot deny that as a county we're slightly behind in the Digital Age. Working with other departments I'll identify various changes that I believe our county can benefit from. Doing so should improve the financial process by eliminating unnecessary manual tasks and will also free up manpower allowing us to better serve the citizens of Grant County.

Please allow me, Julie Ellison, to leverage my 30+ years of accounting experience and loyal dedication to the community, to continue in Kathy's footsteps to maintain and improve the financial well-being of our great county.

Tandi Merkord

1. The position I am running for is Grant County Treasurer. It is a very important role to the county, all the county's finances pass through this office and need to be accurately accounted for. The budget must balance and each payable and receivable documented for the county to see.

2. I am running for Treasurer to serve the people of Grant County. I am experienced not only in accounting, but also working with government agencies. It is my goal to upgrade the systems that are in place and to improve the transparency of the county's finances to the public.

3. My background is over 20 years in accounting. I attended college taking accounting, budgeting and math courses. I am experienced in accounts payable, receivable, payroll, budgeting, cost accounting and bank reconciliation. I work for the Grant

County Road Department, which has one of the largest budgets in the county. Some of my current responsibilities are tracking our costs, preparing accounts payables, recording receivables and balancing budget expenditures. I previously worked for two other government agencies, the City of John Day as senior accounts clerk and the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument as maintenance clerk/cost accounting. I enjoy the challenge of the checks and balances of a budget. I also serve on the Dayville School Board. My other job is doing all the accounting for our cattle ranch and my husband's excavation business. I understand balancing budgets and making your money work for you. My goal is to show the County's budget honestly, holding each department, along with the County Judge and Commissioners responsible in their decisions on how the County's funds are spent.

4. The issues I would like to address are the Court's decisions on the County's expenditures. We, the County officials, are elected by the people. It is our responsibility to be accountable to each citizen. Our priorities should reflect the people of Grant County. We live in a county where people work hard and don't want their money wasted. If I can show the public exactly, down to the penny, where the money is being spent, then I am doing my job. I want to be honest, my integrity is on the line. Another issue or goal I have is to update the County's programs, to make documents available online. To update the accounting systems to pay bills online, automatic payroll online, look up the budget, pay taxes online...these are some of my goals. We live in a very large county where a trip to town is not always possible, so if you could sit in the comfort of your own home while checking on something at the County...wow technology! Most important though is to work together to make this County successful. We live in one of the most beautiful places on earth, lets take care of it!

PUBLIC FOREST COMMISSION NO. 5

Jim Boethin

1. I am running for Grant Co. Public Forest Comm. Position #5.

2. I believe the Forest Comm. needs to play a vital role in bringing balance between county residents, their values and our public lands management by the USFS, BLM, and the environmentalists.

3. I am a life-long resident of Grant County. I am passionate about our environment in our county, which in my opinion has spiraled out of control at the hands of environmentalist mandates! The culmination of which has been the Canyon Creek Complex. That being said, I believe my greatest qualifying point may be my personal experience in this county. I have been a contractor, professional trapper, saw mill employee and a carpenter for ODFW placing fish screens. I also plan on retiring at the end of this year and my bucket list is pretty short so I can donate some real time to our forest health.

4. The issues at hand are both simple and complex. Jobs first and forest health are issues that need to be keenly addressed. Then add to this mix, recreational opportunities. With environmentalists, their lawyers, judges, and politicians controlling our public lands the last 25 years all of us should be able to see where this has brought us. Sound management is sorely lacking and far from where it needs to be. The huge business of fire needs to take a back seat to said sound management. Thanks!

Howard Gieger

1. I believe that the Public Forest Commission should be working for the people that elected them to the position. The PFC has been charged with the duty of keeping the public and the court advised of the actions of public land managers on access and management of our public lands.

2. I will be able to help move to Commission forward. It appears that some of the people running for a position, seek to destroy the Commission. I will listen to the people of Grant County and address the issues that they feel important regarding our forest.

3. I have lived in Grant County for 50 years, transferring here by the company I worked for, spending 33 years working as a claims investigator, working fraud and arson cases. I retired in 2000, but continued to work