

# Candidates for circuit court judge spar in online debate

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle



Eagle file photos

**From left, Rob Raschio, John Lamborn and Jim Carpenter are vying for the circuit court judge position for Grant and Harney counties. The candidates participated in a candidate forum Friday that was hosted by the Harney County Chamber of Commerce.**

Candidates vying for circuit court judge sparred Friday in an online town hall forum hosted by the Harney County Chamber of Commerce.

The three contenders — local attorney Rob Raschio, Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter, and Harney County attorney John Lamborn — answered questions surrounding sentencing for repeat drug offenders, the court's efficiency and why they are best suited for the bench.

State Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, moderated and asked the candidates about their experiences, backgrounds and what they would bring to the bench.

Carpenter said, as a member of the community of Grant and Harney counties, he is suited for this area.

"We need a judge who understands the situation they are in," Carpenter said. "One of the jokes I made about myself as a civil litigator was that I would not have been able to afford myself if I needed an attorney. We need someone who understands that the people can't afford a long and lengthy process."

Carpenter also touted his time as an arbitrator of cases, where he

was a judge in an informal setting and rendered decisions. He said each of the cases heard did not go on to higher courts, and his rulings were upheld.

"I have the broadest range of experience, the background and the tone and the feeling of the community," Carpenter said.

Lamborn said he has 30 years of legal experience and that he is the current justice of the peace pro tem for Harney County and has been for about five years. Lamborn said he hears cases when the full-time justice of the peace has conflicts or cannot listen to arguments.

Lamborn said he was also chairman of the Planning Commission and Housing Authority in Harney County for eight and three years, respectively.

Lamborn also said he was

the Oregon State Bar criminal defender, where he worked on legislation regarding elderly abuse prevention and worked on a board that enforced legal ethics rules and violations.

"I bring an incredible wealth of information," Lamborn said. "Given all of that experience, I am your best choice for circuit court judge."

Raschio said that he has run two offices in Grant and Harney counties for 18 years and that he has worked on thousands of cases that cover a broad range of legal matters where a circuit court judge needs to be knowledgeable.

"I've served in statewide leadership roles in the Oregon State Bar and gained a deeper understanding of the law," he said.

## SHERIFF POSITION WILL BE ON NOVEMBER BALLOT

Five Grant County positions are on the ballot in 2020, but only the race for sheriff is contested.

Incumbent Sheriff Glenn Palmer will face former undersheriff Todd McKinley, the director of Grant County Community Corrections. The race will appear on the November ballot because state law requires the position to be elected during the general election.

Also on the November ballot will be the county treasurer position, where incumbent Treasurer Julie Ellison is running unopposed.

Assessor David Thunell, County Commissioner Jim Hamscher and County Surveyor Michael Springer — all incumbents — are running unopposed for reelection and will appear on the May primary ballot.

Raschio noted his time as a Grant County commissioner, Burns city councilor and justice of the peace pro tem.

"I understand the thorny issues around the public, private interface," he said.

Raschio said, as a Grant County commissioner, he drafted the objection to the revised forest plan that was heavily contested by the community.

The candidates were asked how they would deal with youth that come before them in court.

Lamborn said, if elected Judge, the rules for youth would be applied differently than they would for an adult.

"Kids are kids," he said. "Kids don't have frontal lobe development. They act without thinking."

Lamborn said the child that comes before him in his court would learn something and will not just be punished.

Raschio said that youth should be treated thoughtfully. He said, as adults, people are responsible for the upbringing of their kids, and that includes the community. He said those who make mistakes, intentionally or otherwise, will need to be held accountable.

He said the Harney County teen court, which he is involved

with, has been successful in rehabilitating youth offenders through peer modeling.

"For kids who are accused for more serious offenses, I'll follow the law," Raschio said. "I will also focus on parents. I'm going to be asking them questions about how their kids got in front of this court, and I'll be outlining expectations for them about what I'll expect them to do so their children make changes."

Carpenter said there are two types of juvenile court cases. The first is a dependency case, where there are issues of the parenting of the child. The other is the juvenile system, where there is a crime committed by the child. Carpenter said, in dependency cases, the priority should be to protect the child. He said, in those cases, hard decisions have to be made about whether they should be with their parent or somewhere else.

Carpenter said he has been involved in dependency cases as district attorney and a civil litigator for 17 years.

"I'm able to make those hard decisions about what is best for a child," he said.

Carpenter said he agreed with Raschio and Lamborn on juvenile system cases in that he will work to change the behavior of children who commit crimes.

## Jim Carpenter says he is the most conservative candidate

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle



Jim Carpenter

Jim Carpenter, Grant County's current district attorney, said he is the most conservative of the three candidates running for circuit court judge.

Carpenter said conservatives in the legal community were concerned that there was not a conservative voice running for the bench. Carpenter said there is a lot of concern about the threat to citizens' Second Amendment gun rights.

"I am an active shooter," Carpenter said. "I go to a gun club. I enjoy those activities. I don't hunt too much, but I enjoy shooting and hanging out with people that do."

"There is quite a variance in support of Second Amendment rights," he added. "There is your Joe Biden: 'I support the Second Amendment, everybody can have a hunting rifle, and I'm taking everything else, but you can have a hunting rifle.' I think that's closer to where my opponents are."

Carpenter said there are felons and people with mental illness who should not have firearms, but he said law-abiding people who want a gun should have the right to have one.

"I think my opponents would absolutely uphold gun restrictions as long as somebody had their hunting rifle," Carpenter said. "I would be more on the other end that, if you qualify for gun ownership, you can have whatever it is you can buy now."

He said there are "unchecked" meth, heroin and cocaine problems in the community and that there has been legislation in the last few years that has made possession of almost every controlled substance a misdemeanor if there are no other factors involved. Carpenter said his opponents had supported the legislation, while he did not.

Carpenter said the trend is getting people help for possession of controlled substances and drug addiction, and he does not object to that, but he said drug offenders need to have consequences as well. Or else, he said, people will continue breaking the law.

"I think there needs to be a consequence and a program, as opposed to just programming," Carpenter said. "I think that is one of the areas where we differ in our strategies."

Carpenter said he is all for helping people get better.

"I don't like to see people in trouble," Carpenter said. "I like to see people succeed."

He said he is not about sending people to jail and forgetting about them, but at the same time those, who break the law need to pay the consequences.

Carpenter said, should he win, he would be a "new sheriff in town," for lack of a better term, from day one. He said there would be stricter consequences and opportunities for

## John Lamborn says he's the most experienced candidate

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle



John Lamborn

Circuit court judge candidate John Lamborn said, while the judge is a nonpartisan position, he is a very pro-First Amendment candidate.

He said people's reluctance in Grant County to talk about their political preferences surprised him in that regard.

"I'm very pro-First Amendment," Lamborn said. "I think everybody should feel free to express themselves."

Lamborn said he is very pro-Second Amendment as well. He said he is a gun owner and a hunter. He said Second Amendment rights are an essential part of the fabric of society in Eastern Oregon.

"I don't want anybody trying to take my guns away," Lamborn said. "Although, as judge, if the law requires me to do whatever the law requires me to do, I'll be required to do it, absent whatever my personal preference is. I'd follow the law as it relates to the Second Amendment."

Lamborn said he understands people's frustration with repeat offenders in the legal system.

He said misdemeanors, property theft and burglaries are primarily a problem in many communities. Lamborn said these crimes stem from lack of employment and lack of education.

Lamborn said, as judge, he would work with those offenders to "reach into themselves" to figure out how not to commit those crimes in the future. Lamborn said, if elected circuit court judge, he would tackle docket issues on day one. He said a majority of the cases that come through the 24th

Judicial District are criminal cases and that civil matters, such as divorces and custody cases, take a backseat to criminal cases.

"Those are the cases that tend to languish," he said.

Lamborn said, as judge, he would put those cases on a faster track.

"I would work hard to, at least once a month, to have what I would call a divorce-apalooza, and get those cases all wrangled into a single date," Lamborn said.

Lamborn said the court spends a lot of valuable attorney time to manage calendars and when the next dates are going to happen. "I'm not sure that is the kind of thing that needs to happen on the record, like it does now," Lamborn said.

Lamborn said he would designate someone to coordinate dates to give the public certainty about when their court dates will take place. Lamborn said what sets him apart from the other two candidates is his experience. Lamborn said he has practiced law longer than both of his opponents.

"I have seen a wide range of cases over my 30 years," Lamborn said. "I have really seen the gamut of issues. The criminal law is one thing, but I have been involved in a huge number of domestic-relations cases. I've been involved in water-rights matters, hunting violations kinds of cases — I can't even tell you how many of these kinds of cases I've seen over the years."

Lamborn said his experience sets him apart from his competitors.

## Rob Raschio says he is most invested in the community

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle



Rob Raschio

Local attorney Rob Raschio said his campaign for circuit court judge has received over 200 endorsements from across the state.

Raschio told the Eagle he was looking forward to knocking on doors in Grant and Harney County, but due to the global pandemic and social distancing, he had to pivot to online communication.

"I was looking forward to getting out and meeting people," Raschio said.

Raschio said, throughout his campaign, he has heard people are concerned about the revolving doors in the criminal justice system.

"How do we get people to stop recidivating? It is a perennial question," Raschio said.

Raschio said people need to be given the right tools when they are released from jail or prison.

"We have, first, to give people a chance to succeed," Raschio said. "We have to tell them they have an opportunity to succeed and tell them there are consequences if they don't, and if they don't succeed, then we'll have to put them in jail for as long as we can. Why do we have to do that? Because that is what the community requires of us. Why do we have to do that? Because that is what public safety requires of us, and they need to recognize that people deem them and think of them as a threat to the community."

Raschio said the job of a judge is to help people find and identify services for felons who

come out of jail or prison. Raschio said, if he were judge, he would like to see Community Counseling Solutions and Symmetry Care in Burns at the time of sentencing and he would do "warm hand-offs."

Raschio said he has been engaged with the community at every level, from his time on the Grant County Court as a commissioner, to having two kids in the Grant School District.

"I am engaged with young people, and I am very bought-in to the notion that our streets need to be safe, because I've got to be sure the kids are safe," Raschio said. "My kids, my friends' kids, all of my kids' classmates, all of the kids in this community and down in Harney County."

Raschio said he has demonstrated that by purchasing animals from 4-H kids to sponsoring baseball teams.

"I'm here, and I care and I want to make a difference," Raschio said. "And I want to lead, and I want to lead through example."

Raschio also noted his legal background and principles.

"I have been the president of the Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, a statewide organization, and I advocated for open government," Raschio said. "That's because it's a principle that I hold dear to me: no secrecy, open government, open court systems. I don't hide the ball."

**GRANT COUNTY Oregon**

**Grant County Oregon Covid-19 Coronavirus Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Information Page.**

*The Grant County COVID-19 EOC (Emergency Operations Center) has a web site.*

**NEW WEBSITE** [grantcountycovid.com](http://grantcountycovid.com)

- The new site has a new page dedicated to the EOC that explains what the EOC is, who's involved and weekly updates.
- The Grant County Draft Reopening Plan for Phase 1 is now available for you to view.
- It provides daily updated statistics for COVID-19 tests undertaken in the county as provided by the Grant County Health Department.
- The website also provides scam alerts, content for families and others impacted by stay at home restrictions, health information to assist keeping you and your family safe.
- The website offers assistance on money-related matters for: unemployment matters, employers who have lost business and for small business owners who have been impacted.
- It provides up-to-date information on what is or is not currently allowed. There is content about what you can do to help and there are answers to many frequently asked questions.

**The EOC welcomes your helpful suggestions for improving the website.**  
Please visit the **NEW** website: [grantcountycovid.com](http://grantcountycovid.com)

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- HIV Testing & Referrals
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- WIC
- High Risk Infants
- Maternity Case Management

Grant County Health Department does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, or age in admission, treatment, or participation in its programs, services and activities, or in employment.

**Beth Spell**  
**House District 60**  
Ballots Due May 19

Working together for renewal and revitalization of our District

I am the descendant of early settlers of Baker and Grant Counties who came to Oregon in the late 1800s. I want to see our quality of life maintained with good stewardship of our natural resources while providing leadership in seeking ways to still preserve the livelihoods of those who depend upon the land.

**Vote for Beth Spell, Democrat, for Oregon House District 60**

Paid for by Beth Spell