

Letters: Readers speak on fire district board recall petition

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firefighters supporting chief Balzer. At the board meeting of Nov. 9, firefighter Erik Meyer presented a packet containing 18 letters signed by Cannon Beach firefighters questioning the board's actions and expressing their support for Balzer. A number of similar letters from community members were also given to the board. The mailer highlights fire district accomplishments over the past 20 years, all of them completed during Balzer's tenure as firefighter and chief, while ignoring his contributions. The mailer states that the recall will only appease a small group of people not associated with the fire district. I am honored to stand with more than 150 Cannon Beach residents who signed the recall petitions. As Cannon Beach residents and taxpayers, we are all associated with our firefighters.

As a former first responder, I am most proud of our volunteer firefighters and their service, leaving their families and putting their own lives at risk to protect our community. It is well past time for a change in the Cannon Beach RFPD board of directors. Please vote "yes" to support the recall.

Eric Reiter
Tolovana Park

Recall of no benefit

Please vote no on the recall of three Cannon Beach Fire Board directors. I support the Cannon Beach Fire District board of directors as do the majority of the fire district officers at our last officer's meeting. In the 10 years I have been a volunteer for the fire department, this board has always been there for the district taxpayers and us. They are very supportive of the firefighters and have always made the effort to give us the best equipment and training available. Recalling three of these directors and turning control of our district over to the Clatsop County commissioners will not benefit the fire department or the tax payers of our district. Again, please vote no.

Brian Smith
Cannon Beach

Vote no on recall

I have been a member of the Cannon Beach Fire Department since 1978, and have held the position of assistant chief since 1996. This department is made up of volunteers, including those who

drive the trucks and put out fires, along with those who make and oversee the rules and regulations that govern the business of running a fire department, our board of directors.

I am concerned about the motives of this recall. A recall should be for failure to do the job that the public (the voters) have elected the person to do. This department is one of the Oregon's finest because our board, over the years, has provided its members with the finest equipment, facilities and support necessary to run a fire district, which in turn benefits our property owners with lower fire insurance ratings, thereby providing lower insurance premiums.

The board members under recall have been instrumental in providing for the community the following: moving the fire station to a safer and higher location, replacing two aging fire trucks, paying off a bond measure one year early and returning the difference to the taxpayers, and providing the funding for a community tsunami warning system. Garry Smith, a 28-year volunteer firefighter and now volunteer board member, along with retired board member Al Aya, researched, designed and installed the warning system to benefit the entire town.

The same board members were able to build a new, and safer, substation in Arch Cape without asking the voters for additional tax increases. Last year with the help of our training officer, the city of Cannon Beach, L & C Timber Co., district savings and a few other donors, our board was able to procure a brush truck for fighting wildland (timber) fires.

The latest achievement from this board has been the purchase of a 75-foot aerial ladder truck. This acquisition was a joint effort of Board President Sharon Clyde, for acquiring bond financing, Officer Gary Moon and his committee for designing the truck, and the generous support of our voters, who have trusted the direction of this district for many years.

Each member of this board, not just the ones selected in this recall, have and will continue to provide hours of their time to do the job they were elected to do, which is provide this community a safe and protected place to live.

Recalling these directors will not benefit this community or

RECALL ELECTION

Important Dates

- FEB. 24** Signature sheets submission are received.
- FEB. 26** Signatures on signature sheets are verified and meet the required number of signatures. Chief petitioner and public officials are notified.
- MAR. 2** Last day for public officials to submit a written resignation or statement of justification.
- MAR. 7** Long term/military and out of state ballots are mailed.
- MAR. 16** Official ballots mailed.
- APR. 1** Public certification test, 9 a.m. Judge Guy Boyington Building, 857 Commercial St., Astoria.
- APR. 5 ELECTION DAY** **Election Day.** The Clatsop County Elections Office will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Ballots must be delivered to the Cannon Beach City Hall drop site or the County Clerk's Office, 820 Exchange St., 2nd Floor, Astoria no later than 8 p.m. on this date. Postmarks are not considered.
- APR. 25** Last day to prepare and deliver abstracts.

—From the Clatsop County Clerk

the fire department. Acquire the complete facts, then please join me in voting no on this recall.

Frank Swedenborg
Assistant fire chief, Cannon Beach Fire Department

Reject the recall

I urge voters to reject the recalls targeting three Cannon Beach Fire District Board members. As a member of the Fire District Budget Committee for the last several years, I have participated in numerous district committee and board meetings. With one exception, before Mike Balzer became chief, there were no members of the general public present. Had the public taken an active interest and attended even a smattering of meetings during Mike's tenure, they would understand and support Mike's dismissal.

For example, the budget is the responsibility of the chief to prepare. Even if he doesn't prepare it, he clearly needs to fully understand and be able to

explain it. Over the course of three budget cycles, I observed no significant improvement in Mike's ability to understand, or explain it. Rather, he became increasingly unpleasant over time when asked questions; often board members had to step in and explain for him.

Voters need to understand that Mike was clearly given more than fair notice of the board's general unhappiness with his performance. At the time of his performance evaluation several months before his dismissal, the board had ample documentation and reason to dismiss.

Out of a genuine desire for Mike's success, the decision was made to give him one more chance. Thus the evaluation in-

cluded a work plan reflecting all of the prior board suggestions and requests for Mike to seek needed knowledge and improvement. Mike's response was to say that the plan was unworkable.

Many people have said that what really bothers them is not the fact of Mike's dismissal, but how it was done. I agree that in some details it might have been handled more graciously, but that does not justify a recall. The fact remains that the fire district and the public deserve a better fire chief than Mike Balzer was willing to become.

When you live in a small town, it takes courage to fire a longtime resident with many friends. We are lucky to have a board with such dedicated and

principled people, who are willing to put their personal concerns aside to do something that was bound to be controversial.

Vote against the recalls and for a stronger Volunteer Fire and Rescue District.

Marty Schwab Harris
Tolovana Park

Reject recall

For several decades my wife Connie and I have enjoyed visiting Cannon Beach, initially as casual once or twice a year visitors. Over the years those visits grew in frequency, until it made sense for us to buy a second home in one of the world's most beautiful places. For over 20 years that home became our treasured escape from the daily rigors of our professional lives in Seattle.

During that time we made many new friends in Cannon Beach, marveling at the community's collective commitment to maintaining a livable town, and the volunteer hours contributed by so many to ensure that status would be in place for future generations.

We watched as the community wrestled with growth and social issues, always seeming — after sometimes heated debates — to arrive at solutions reflecting the mutual goal of making Cannon Beach an even better place to live. A perfect example of that process in action is the Cannon Beach Fire District Board of Directors, a group of five dedicated citizens who every four years submit themselves to the scrutiny of the electorate, at least those citizens who participate in our democracy by voting.

During the past two decades that board, with the assistance of a dedicated team of volunteer firefighters, has grappled with a myriad of issues that ultimately improved service and kept insurance rates low throughout the district, including relocating the fire station from inadequate space in downtown to the

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Mark McCurties has had a life-long love of the Bible and its inspiring message of individual triumph over adversity. While working with young people, he had many opportunities to witness the healing power of God, and these inspiring experiences eventually led him into the full-time public practice of Christian Science. Mark is a member of the Christian Science Board of Lectureship.

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