

# ‘Tightwad Thompson’ answers back to critics

Ever since her election as District 5 representative for the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, Lianne Thompson has been a lightning rod for critics and supporters alike. A resident of Arch Cape, Thompson’s approach drew claims from the commission that her trips outside the region were unproductive and unrelated to the county’s goals. Thompson responded by insisting that her trips to conferences and training are attempts to build relationships and bring resources to the county. In September, an investigation into an incident alleging that Thompson “crossed the boundary of decorum” led to further headlines. At the board’s November meeting, the board agreed to reimburse her for travel and other expenses she has incurred so far this year, though she may have to pay her own way on some future trips. What’s coming up as the seat goes up for re-election next spring?

• • •

### Q: Tell me about your background.

Thompson: My dad drove a truck. My mom was a secretary in Lansing, Michigan. They were upwardly mobile. They bought into a wholesale beer and wine distributorship.

### Q: How did you form your outlook on life?

Thompson: I received an undergraduate degree from Michigan State and graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in social work. I started out as a caseworker at the Ingham County Department of Social Services in Lansing in 1968.

I moved from Lansing to Detroit when Detroit was “Murder City.” I worked with kids in the precinct that had the highest murder rate in the country. You could really see what happens when an economy disintegrates.

I’ve never forgotten what it’s like to be surrounded by people with no opportunities. I really paid attention. I never forgot: I’m white, I have an education. There are people that really have problems. They’re hungry, they are addicted. People have physically abusive relationships — real problems. So those of us that have the ability — the background, the skills — we ought to come forward, to come to the table, so we can all work together on what there is to work out.

### Q: How did you arrive here in the West?

Thompson: I married my second husband and moved up to Anchorage, Alaska. I ran a senior center in Anchorage. Then I started a small business in Portland. In five years I sold it for five figures. I was proud. So I haven’t done just public service. And I still have a coaching degree.

I have three grown-up children and three grandchildren.

### Q: Why did you enter the political arena?

Thompson: My parents raised us to be good citizens and that’s what I strived for. When I was 23 years old, I handed out campaign literature for my

### CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX



husband’s boss at the Ingham County Fair. I worked on a couple dozen campaigns.

I ran for Multnomah County auditor in 1988. I talked to someone and (during the campaign) they said, “You’re just too tight. You should call yourself ‘Tightwad’ Thompson.”

### Q: Are you still frugal? You are accused of spending more than other Clatsop County commissioners.

Thompson: For over a decade now I have lived in a house that is 846 square feet. It’s a beautiful house, It’s small but compact, efficient. I drive a Prius. I drive like grandma — 52.8 miles a gallon. That takes some doing.

### Q: When did you take office in Clatsop County?

Thompson: I got on the county planning commission in 2011 and served for five years until I got onto the board of commissioners.

I ran and won in May 2014. But before I won, County Clerk Maeve Kennedy Grimes told me we would have to re-run the election because bad ballots went out. I won the election by 81 votes but it didn’t count. The judge said the whole district had to re-vote because there were bad ballots in Seaside. We ran in a September special election. I won again and took office January 2015.

### Q: Was there conflict with other commissioners at the start?

Thompson: Not everybody agrees what the role of a county commissioner should be. That is the meat of the issue.

### Q: Do you have a particular philosophy?

Thompson: I do the best job I know how to do. I try to learn from others and hope to contribute to the group as we work together. That’s my hope.

### Q: What is the county commission expense issue about from your perspective?

Thompson: I moderated a panel of experts at the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute in Portland to focus their attention and have the benefit of their best thinking to help Seaside. It was way more than a marketing opportunity. The room was full of experts, because Seaside is ground zero. I thought it was important to attend, not only to learn and grow, but to network with people to bring their expertise and resources to Clatsop County.

I submitted bills that I thought were simple and as frugal as could be. They paid part and I paid part. (Commission Chairman) Scott Lee thought my hotel bill was extravagant, but I worked hard to get the best deal I could find. I understand people have limited time, but don’t thump on me because I’m working hard. Don’t complain because I am using public resources for public good. They hired two Portland lawyers to “investigate” me as an employee. If I were an employee, I would’ve gotten stress disability and sued the socks off them for a hostile work environment.



MCKENZIE FARRELL

Lianne Thompson

### Q: What would you like to see from the board of commissioners?

Thompson: We did visioning in 2014. I went to six sessions all over the county, from Knappa to Elsie to Arch Cape. (Former Commissioner) Dirk Rohne came to one. I didn’t see any other commissioners at the sessions. We have not translated vision into mission. At the end this is a rubber-stamp process.

In June 2015, I put a written statement on the record that I am not voting for this budget because we don’t have a plan, we don’t have goals.

### Q: So you’ve been looking forward for a change in the budget process?

Thompson: Oh, yes. Lord, yes. I’d like to see an open, extended budget process. I’d like to see the budget sessions move around.

We have every single meeting at night in Astoria that limits the people who can attend. The board of commissioners used to meet in Seaside pretty regularly. That no longer happens. Now they say that’s because all the TV cameras are at the Boyington Center. That just started. It’s comfortable for some people to keep doing the same thing.

### Q: In September, commissioners alleged you placed your hands on a county employee and spoke in a loud and frustrated tone about County Manager Cameron Moore after a Red Cross meeting at Fort Clatsop in June.

Thompson: There was no written complaint ever. And my attorney asked.

### Q: Do you think this debate is over?

Thompson: I don’t know. It came out of the blue.

### Q: Do you regret your actions?

Thompson: I don’t want to offend anybody. Do I wave my hands around, do I touch people? If I offend you, please tell me. I will apologize. But to make this into something where I harassed and intimidated somebody?

### Q: Do you have hopes that you can work it out with this group?

Thompson: Sure, I always hope. I hope that the county commission can come together for a common purpose to serve the people of Clatsop County.

### Q: Is there a way out of this? It sounds like a deep mire.

Thompson: There’s a phrase in a “dark room wandering.” I’m a hopeful person, so I hope so. I don’t know.



COURTESY BRUCE’S CANDY KITCHEN

Christmas chocolates from Bruce’s Candy Kitchen in Cannon Beach.

# Christmas candyland

My major achievement of the day is I found your missing sock,” my husband said. This was big news as I’d held on to its mate for nearly a year. Normally if six months goes by and a missing sock has not turned up, the survivor is resigned to the trash bin. But this was a special sock, a red sock, a Christmas sock, and there it was, buried deep in my husband’s closet, clinging to an old sweater.

When December rolls around, I do a lot of rooting. Mostly I root around the closets and the cedar chest and the old armoire. I take a poke around the laundry room, in hopes of discovering where last January I stowed the holiday ornaments. To my chagrin, every year they turn up someplace else. A few years ago, I never did locate any of the twinkly lights or our Christmas stockings. This meant I went out and bought more stuff which means there’s twice as much stuff now to get lost.

I’m not keen on last minute shopping, because that’s when you really break the bank, so I’ve become that person who hoards gifts to give all year. An entire cabinet in my kitchen is devoted to fancy soaps, candles, body creams, perfumes, lotions, potions, and scrubs and other feminine effluvia of the beauty-enhancing trade. Some of these items I buy; others just appear in the mail, courtesy of one of my many jobs, blogging about beauty products. When it comes to gifts, anything to eat is always welcome. One year we received a large tub of popcorn from The Popcorn Factory featuring six different flavors of popcorn. I was very pleased with this gift and for a week ate popcorn morning, noon and night. I had to keep eating it, because I couldn’t decide which flavor I liked best.

Speaking of sweets, I’d like to mention Bruce’s Candy Kitchen. There are two stores you can visit, one on Hemlock Street in Cannon Beach, the other at the outlet mall in Seaside. Both stores are stocked with mouthwatering temptations including salt water taffy, caramels, brittles, homemade fudge, and popcorns. They have licorice, malted milk balls, cordials, sugar-free candies, and of course chocolates. They have almond and coconut haystacks, almond bark, chocolate covered gummy bears, and chocolate seashells. They make their own gumballs and candy corn. Special for the holidays they’re offering Christmas Twinkies, Nutter Butters, candy cane popcorn and Dutch mints.

Holidays are a time for indulgence and the heck with the dentist, apologies to my own great dentist, Dr. Stephanie White, at Gearhart Dentistry. I know she understands. It would be so easy to do all my shopping for friends and family back East via Bruce’s Candy Kitchen. They offer standard delivery, two-day and overnight delivery if you’re really behind the eight ball.

### VIEW FROM THE PORCH

EVE MARX



‘WHEN IT COMES TO GIFTS, ANYTHING TO EAT IS ALWAYS WELCOME.’

## Actions hard to accept

I am troubled by recent letters supporting Commissioner Lianne Thompson that suggest that Chairman Scott Lee, and the commissioners asking for her resignation, are the ones acting unprofessionally.

For the better part of a year I attended Clatsop County Commission meetings in order to make regular public testimony on the Linn County timber lawsuit. I can say unequivocally that during that time I never observed any behavior, or heard comments made by Chairman Lee or the other commissioners, that were in any way unprofessional. Regrettably, I cannot say the same about Commissioner Thompson.

At one of the meetings, I pointed out that Commissioner Thompson’s husband serves as the business manager for Linn County, and was integral to the filing of the timber lawsuit. I suggested that she recuse herself on the lawsuit vote. I made this suggestion after conferring

with someone who had served on various boards who agreed that recusal would be the professional thing to do. Thompson’s reaction to my suggestion was one of defiance, because I was bringing up her “personal life.”

At another meeting, Thompson claimed that she had not been on the commission when the vote was taken to approve the Clatsop County Vision 2030 Together plan, which demonstrates the public’s support for conservation of forest lands.

A review of the record showed that Thompson was on the board at the time, and had voted to approve the plan. When confronted with the misrepresentation of her voting record, Thompson said she had “a senior moment.” That’s a difficult excuse to accept, considering the importance of that vote.

In her efforts to keep Clatsop County in the class of the lawsuit, Thompson discredited the vision plan because the meetings held by the research firm conducting the

study were only attended by “activists.” Having attended one of those meetings myself, I can say that was not the case. Finally, when the overwhelming majority of public comments, along with many emails and letters sent to the commission called for opting out of the lawsuit, Commissioner Thompson chose to go against the public with her vote.

Roger Dorband  
Astoria

## District 5 needs Lianne Thompson

I have known Lianne Thompson for several years, and supported her election as commissioner in District 5. She has not disappointed me in her commitment to the needs of Clatsop County. Her work has been steadfast and exemplary. Rarely has there been a county commissioner more dedicated to service for the well-being of all in Clatsop County and beyond.

She has done hours of volunteer work, attended meetings, and has

been receptive to the ideas from the communities she serves. Lianne studies issues from all angles, and is not beholden to any specific interest group. That she attends meetings and training outside of Clatsop County for knowledge and other perspectives is a plus.

The number of assignments she has accepted, and her attention to them, is remarkable. In reading the numerous letters written in her support, obviously she has made an impact in helping constituents in the county as a whole, which has been noted not only by state Rep. Deborah Boone, but by commissioners from other counties, and from those holding, or have held, significant positions in Clatsop County.

District 5 is large and diverse. The issues affecting coastal areas can be very different from those in rural areas. Commissioner Thompson works diligently to help find solutions to everyone’s needs: family wage jobs; affordable housing; environmental impacts affecting regional livelihoods; and prepared-

ness to deal with catastrophes and recovery.

Much coverage, and I assume county expenditure, has been devoted to a situation that occurred after a Red Cross meeting earlier this year. What seems to have had little coverage is what perpetrated it. Why would the county manager schedule a meeting, knowing that Commissioner Thompson could not attend, when the chief agenda item was one under her purview? At the very least, this seems disrespectful.

In the future, I would hope that the commission would find ways to address the challenges facing Clatsop County with more cooperation, and less castigation. There is, indeed, value in listening to other perspectives on issues. No one has all the answers.

I will, indeed, support Lianne Thompson for another term representing District 5.

Karen Hoyt  
Cannon Beach

See Letters, Page 5A