

Candidates' Forum Morrow County Treasurer

Candidates for Morrow County Treasurer, Gayle Gutierrez, Marie B. Key and incumbent Margo Sherer were asked to respond to the following questions concerning their candidacy: How can you assist in making the treasurer's office more accountable to the voters?; What are the major issues facing you as Morrow County Treasurer?; What is your role as treasurer?; What changes would you make if elected?; Do you feel that north Morrow County is well served by the treasurer's office?; How can you assist in healing some of the interdepartmental courthouse problems?; and Why should the voters elect you over your opponents? Following are their responses:



Gayle Gutierrez, 39, Heppner has lived in Heppner for 13 years. She and her husband, Kim, who is employed as a mechanic with Morrow County Grain Growers, have two children, Jessica, 12, and Joshua, nine. Gutierrez has been an accounting technician with Morrow County for four years. Gutierrez is a graduate of Lone High School and has an associate of science degree from Blue Mountain Community College. She and her husband are active in their children's activities and she assists him in coaching girls' softball.

"I can assist in making the treasurer's office more accountable to the voters by always being accessible and having any information that they may want readily available," says Gutierrez. "The door will always be open to the public."

"The major issues facing the treasurer are properly investing the taxpayer's monies in a safe and secure place while earning the highest interest possible and ensuring that there is enough accessible cash to be able to do day to day business."

"Often times people are disgruntled with their elected officials. I want to be a leader in making people proud once again of their elected officials and make them feel good about their county government."

"As for the day to day operations, I see very few changes. I would work with all the departments in a spirit of cooperation to make certain that the county runs smoothly and efficiently as possible."

"There is no south end or north end of the county where the treasurer is concerned. It is one county without boundaries. The funds are not split when they are invested."

"I can assist in healing the interdepartmental courthouse problems by treating everyone fairly and with respect. Ensuring that the lines of communications are open to every office no matter what problems may occur. When all the departments are working as one, everyone benefits, including the taxpayers."

"Having worked in the treasurer's office before, it would not be on-the-job training. Once again I would make certain that communication between all the offices are open. I would be committed to the idea that the voters deserve my time, loyalty and 100 percent effort."



Marie B. Key, 56 lone, has lived in the county 18 years. She and her husband, Joe, who is employed with Kinzua Resources, have three grown children, Lenora, Tim and Jeffrey, who are all now living in lone. Their son, Rick died in 1993. Key has been employed as the office manager for the Morrow County Public Works/Road Department Office for the last three years. Key has completed 72 college credit hours and has received a one-year certificate of completion in business management at a Tyler Commercial College. Key has been a Parent-Teacher's Association (PTA) treasurer and president and is past president of the Women's Aglow club. She has served two years on the Commission of Children and Families and has been secretary-treasurer for the Christian Life Center for one year.

"The treasurer is accountable to the voters by Oregon statutes," says Key, "but many of the voters don't know that. I would try to make the voters more aware of what the treasurer does and the treasurer's responsibility to them."

"Trying to re-establish a healthy, positive cooperative relationship with other county officials and departments. Regaining the taxpayers' respect for the office and county government in general."

"The treasurer manages county revenues. There are 30 county funds and 60 trust and agency funds. The treasurer manages the special transportation fund (seniors). Those are the duties and they are governed by Oregon statutes. I feel that any elected official should always act as an ambassador to the people they serve."

"Several positive changes: I would try to improve communication between the treasurer's office and the county court and other county departments. I would try to be more aware of what's going on in county government in general. I would work very hard to earn the respect of the public, other county officials and employees."

"Taxes assessed in both north and south Morrow County come into the treasurer's office. All monies that come to the county benefit the county as a whole. Example: the health nurses, mental health, planning, law enforcement, roads, etc. Since most of the growth is in the north end, more personnel resources are expended there. Gains made on investments are made to benefit all of the county."

"I would improve communication between the treasurer's office and other departments, and try to be aware of problems, work load, etc., they may be having. I would never bring personality conflicts into a professional setting. I'm a very positive person and always try to be fair and get along with everyone. To me being positive means encouraging the potential of every person. To me, being professional doesn't mean setting yourself up as superior, it means being the best you can be at getting the best out of others...and letting them know they've done well."

"I have the education and experience to do the job, and do it well. I have a much broader range of experience in both the public and private sector. I

have learned to interact positively with all types of people in all situations; that has been proven at the Public Works/Road Department. As much as the treasurer's position allows, I will work to bring healing to north and south Morrow County."



Margo Sherer, 55, lone, has lived in Morrow County 37 years. She and her husband, Dick, who owns a hay and cattle ranch, have three grown sons, Scott, Todd and Brett. Sherer has been the Morrow County Treasurer for 15 years. A 1959 graduate of Odessa High School, Odessa, WA, Sherer has attended numerous classes and workshops relating to her job. She has a certification from the Oregon Association of County Treasurers and Finance Officers. In addition to being county treasurer from 1981 to 1996, Sherer was Morrow County tax collector from 1979 to 1994. She is also a 14-year member of Soroptimist International of Heppner and has been their treasurer for five years.

"The Morrow County Treasurer has long had to decide whether it is better for the county for its money to be invested locally or whether investments should be made where the very best interest rate can be earned," said Sherer. "I have always used a combination of both. The checking accounts are with the Bank of Eastern Oregon. At the present time, I have one million invested in government agency discount notes with First Interstate, one million in a bankers acceptance and an agency note with US Bank, \$350,000 in Inland Investment Fund with Inland Empire Bank and three million in the Oregon State Treasurer's Investment Pool."

"If elected, I plan to organize a county investment advisory committee, asking four to six professional and lay people to meet with me on a quarterly basis to review and discuss county investments."

"I have served all of the citizens of Morrow County by creating procedures that enable the taxing district to receive their taxes and interest earnings in a timely manner, days faster than required by Oregon statute. I transfer to their bank accounts whenever possible or offer same day pick up. County funds and trust and agency funds are paid interest earned on commingled funds based upon each fund's daily average cash balance."

"In cooperation with the tax collector, I have made arrangements so that tax payments can be made at any branch of the banks that have county accounts. I am always open to new ideas."

"I have authorized the state of Oregon to pay all Morrow County revenue directly to our pool account in Salem to avoid delayed or lost-in-the-mail checks, thereby maximizing investment revenue."

"I report monthly to the departments and districts that leave funds with me. Anyone wanting a copy of any information I have need only call me, and that information will be sent to you."

"We're all working together under the leadership of the county court to keep the lines of communications open between departments with staff meetings where we express our concerns and discuss our professional objectives. We are all determined to do the best job possible and are always ready to offer our professional sup-

port to their departments."

"I have demonstrated professionalism, efficiency and straight forward honesty in my

four terms as treasurer and would be honored to be re-elected to a fifth term."

Morrow County Commissioner

Three people are running for Morrow County Commissioner, two on the Democratic ticket, John Wenholz and David Burns, and one unopposed on the Republican ticket, Bill "Whisker Bill" Marren. Either Wenholz or Burns will face Marren in November.

Following are the three candidates' responses to questions asked concerning their views on Morrow County and their candidacy.

The questions included: What do you feel is your role as a Morrow County Commissioner?; As a board member, do you feel you represent the county as a whole or the area from which you were elected?; How can you help accommodate the growth and industry and accompanying problems in the north end of the county, while maintaining quality of life in an uncertain economic situation in the south end of the county?; What do you feel is the commissioner's role in the current problems concerning the Morrow County Health District? Should the health district remain as a county-wide entity or should the district be divided?; How can you encourage the separate county departments to be more accountable to the public?; Do you feel north Morrow County is well served in the area of county services? If not, how can this be rectified?; How can you assist in healing the anger and resentment that exist between north and south county residents?; The home rule proposal was recently defeated. Do you believe that home rule would better serve the citizens of Morrow county?; Should county commissioners be elected from districts or at large? Why?; What are the other major issues facing you as a county commissioner?; What changes would you make if elected?; Why should the voters elect you over your opponents?;



David Burns, 49, Irrigon, has lived 14 years in Morrow County. he and his wife, the former Debbie McCoy, a teacher in Irrigon, have two children, Alysun, 11, and Jessica, nine. He has been a custom cabinet maker with "Custom Cuts Construction" in Irrigon for the past nine years. He and his wife have been partners for the past six years in "Education with Imagination", writing children's songs, poems and stories that she uses in summer workshops for teachers around the Northwest. He is also the owner of "Sportsman Outdoor Services", setting up hunting trips to Alaska and Hawaii. He is a registered Oregon guide and leases part of the Ron Curran, Sr., ranch for deer every year.

Burns attended Pendleton High School and graduated from the University of Oregon with a bachelor of arts degree in business administration. He served a two-year term and was elected vice chair of the Citizen's Advisory Committee for Destruction of Chemical Weapons at Umatilla. Burns is a member of the Irrigon Chamber of Commerce, a past member of Irrigon City Budget Committee, is a coach for girls' softball and basketball teams and has been a member of the Irrigon Community Church for the past 14 years.

"The county court is basically responsible for policy making, budgeting, personnel, legal counsel and general administration of the county," says Burns. "Additionally, since our county is fairly large with over 2000 square miles of county, I see part of the court's responsibility to be sure all parts of the county are represented and that we all communicate with one another so that we all understand our needs as an individual community as well as a united county"

"By reassuring the south end that we are not going to leave them behind. Ours should be a united county. I would do all I could to fully understand the south ends needs and help them diversify and change to keep up with the new economic demands of that area. The north end needs to have a long range, well-thought-out economic plan as well. Too much economic growth in too short of time can reap long term problems including the need for more housing, increased crime rate, pollution problems, etc. We want careful, healthy, prosperous growth-we also need to determine just what type of reputation we want our area to have. We want to attract the type of new industry that will bring steady, long term employment and that will provide a healthy environment as well."

"The county court has little legal standing on the medical clinic issue in Boardman. My inclination would be to want the district to stay united. Health program benefits, as I understand it, give lower prices for larger memberships. I also think it is just a bad precedent to have a district withdraw. However, the Boardman folks seem determined and seem to know exactly what they want. They seem to have the financial backing to support their own clinic, so I don't see that the court has much to say about this decision. It is still to be determined, probably in court, exactly what statutory procedures need to be followed to legally withdraw, however. The eventual withdrawal could free up about \$150,000 that the court then could place elsewhere in the county."

"That's the court's job. I know there is a serious conflict in one of the departments at this point resulting in a lawsuit. A person needs to be qualified for the position, but needs to get along with the staff and management to be an overall good county employee. Since most of these positions are elected, it is the voting public's responsibility to choose the people that are right for the job."

"The north end has traditionally lagged behind. This has all begun to shift some with the new growth at the north end. We are now seeing the real possibility of a new medical clinic in Irrigon as well as a new community center (with help from the county court through tippage fees). Fair distribution of tippage fees, as well as available lottery funds and with the injection of medical district funding, I think the north end is now beginning to receive a fair share of the funding and services available."

"I grew up in Pendleton, have lived the past 14 years in Irrigon. My wife's family moved to Irrigon in the mid-forties. We have just built a nice, new home in Irrigon, have two daughters in school here. I have never had any axe to grind or built-in biases against any area of the county. I would see myself as a focal point to heal the differences-look at the positive aspects of the county instead of the negative. I also don't mind confronting a difficult issue head on and seeking a fair solution. Most problems in this world seem to be based on misunderstanding and miscommunication. I would try to always be open to

suggestion and ready to help in any way possible. We have a lot we could lose, but an awful lot more to gain by working together."

"I think home rule does have some good benefits. I think Eastern Oregonians will always be a 'show me' type of folks who are slow to accept new ideas. I think they will want to sit back and watch the other counties who have adopted this scheme and see how it works. I foresee the issue coming back up again in the future, possibly with different results. I think the main stumbling block now is that we don't want to lose any direct control over our public officials-and that is what most people perceive as the problem with home rule."

"I think there should be the judge, once candidate from the south end, one representing Irrigon, one representing Boardman, and one at large. The voters may not want to invest that much in and increased administration cost, however. If that is the case, they should all remain at large and let the voters decide."

"Road funding for new and repair. I think we should have some type of study to show what roads are being used the most and where the new needs might be. Funding should be allocated according to use and need; the regional 'narco' jail should be studied very carefully so The Dalles/Hood River areas don't get the major share of beds at the expense of Morrow County; Morrow County still has, in my opinion, not tapped fully into the great recreational potential of the area. We need to do more to encourage visitors to stop and spend money here instead of going on by to other areas; increased gang activity. Although relatively small, our area has seen an increase in crime and gang activity. It has to be stopped now; better coordination with the Hispanic community. They are playing an ever-increasing role in the growth of our area."

"I am better educated. I worked very hard for my education and I am proud to have it behind me. Education is still at the foundation of what America is all about. A college education is available to almost all kids who really strive to have it. It is what helps make a person more well-rounded and better prepared to take on the difficulties of life and business and to make good decisions. I am more politically involved. The Governor's Advisory Commission on the Chemical Weapons is a very important group who will help determine the future of Umatilla and Morrow County. The proposed incinerator (that is five incinerators) will, in my opinion and the opinion of an increasing number of scientists, will cause long-term health problems for our area and will cost the taxpayer way too much. There are alternative methods that are safer and cheaper and are ready for use now. I have served on this committee for over two years and have been elected as vice-chair. I am currently serving a second two-year term; I am more creative. Einstein one said that creativity was more important than superior intelligence. Every product we have started was an idea in some creative person's head. I create custom hardwood products as well as create new children's stories and songs out of my head. The answer to most of our county's problems will be found in the heads of the most creative people. I think I am one of those."



Bill "Whisker Bill" Marren, 41, Boardman, has lived in the county since 1981. Marren, who is single, has owned the

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