

# County Commissioner candidate's forum

In preparation for the primary elections to be held on May 21, the Gazette-Times asked each of the four candidates for Morrow County Commissioner to respond to a questionnaire regarding their qualifications and plans if they were to be elected into office.



**David L. Barnett**

Republican  
David L. Barnett was born in Morrow County and grew up in Ione. He is the owner and operator of Ione Key Gas. He is a member of the Valby Lutheran church, an Elks club member and past exalted ruler and a member of his church council. Barnett has been a registered republican since 1949 and served on the state Republican Central Committee. He has been involved in sales, business and personnel management most of his adult life.

**Why would a voter select you over your opponent?**

Basically, the same reason I would vote for someone—confidence in their professional abilities.

**If elected, what is the biggest challenge facing you?**

My most important challenge would be to be what the voters expected of me by the confidence of their vote.

**What major project would you like to see accomplished?**

**What is your first priority?**

My first priority will be to acquaint myself with the others serving on the county commission and then, next, the immediate awaiting responsibilities. I am certain there are many projects that will test my convictions.

**Outline your plan for accommodating growth and other challenges resulting from the proposed Boardman area racetrack.**

It would not be practical to presume any opinion on a project of this magnitude simply from the news stories and rumors that have been circulating around. I am sure there are some awesome economic opportunities to be considered. A few that come to mind; housing/lodging/food/employment and of course, the taxing structure changes at the county level. If it matures into the economic boom that I visualize, it will take more than a momentary inspiration of planning, but will take a few years of input

by whoever will be the Morrow County Commissioners. God willing, time wise, I will accept the challenge.

**What is your plan for drawing businesses/creating jobs in South Morrow County?**

Having been aware of the drastic economic changes in this area for the past few years and being a member of I.C.A.B.O. since it's inception, a lesson has been learned here with the Emert Addition, and that is, to dare to have a dream. I have been privileged to share this experience with the Ione community people. The unspoken secret is community effort so my plan would be to work with some kind of committee throughout the Heppner, Lexington and Ione area. So don't be surprised if I should call on you for some help and input if elected.

In my past experiences, teamwork has most often been the proven formula to success. This should be a common denominator throughout Morrow County. The best county in the state of Oregon in my opinion!



**Ray Grace**

Republican  
Ray Grace first moved to Heppner in 1973 and retired there in 1995. He is the owner of RGA Laser Services in Heppner. Grace is a member of the Saint Patrick's Catholic Church in Heppner and the Elks Lodge. He has served on the board of directors for Columbia Basin Electric Co-Op and has worldwide construction management experience working with engineers, developers, governmental agencies and owners.

**Why would a voter select you over your opponent?**

I am not running against any candidate. I am running for the office.

**If elected, what is the biggest challenge facing you?**

The biggest challenge to county government in the coming years will be to maintain an operating budget. The rural tax base is shrinking and increasing compliance with federal and state mandates is a bottomless hole. At the same time, ongoing regulation increases the difficulty of establishing a stable tax base by increasing the cost and the tax burden of doing business. County

government cannot change this situation, but we must monitor it carefully and react successfully to it.

**What major project would you like to see accomplished? What is your first priority?**

Left unanswered  
**Outline your plan for accommodating growth and other challenges resulting from the proposed Boardman area racetrack?**

By the time the next commissioner comes into office, the Speedway in Boardman will either be in progress or a past issue. The sheer size of the project means it will command diligent oversight if in progress. The next commission will be largely reacting to and monitoring an existing situation.

**What is your plan for drawing businesses/creating jobs in South Morrow County?**

This task will take some re-thinking of standard economic development practices. HEDC sent 10,000 flyers into California during the energy crisis, and has a number of requests for further information. The net gain to present is zero. South Morrow County has one of the lowest electrical rates in the Northwest, guaranteed until 2006; additionally most of the Kinzua buildings are available for minimal rental. The cost of truck transport to and from the I-84 corridor to Heppner, added to the lack of available labor force in the local area obviously offset these benefits, or some businesses would have come. South Morrow County must think "outside the box" to bring in industry or business for whom we can offer benefits not cancelled out by factors over which we currently have no control.



**Betty Gray**

Republican  
Betty Gray has lived in Morrow County since 1985. She is currently the mayor of the City of Ione. Gray has served as a member of the Oregon Mayors Association, I.C.A.B.O., and is a board member of the Baker/Morrow Partnership. She is also active with the Ione Boosters Club, and the Ione Topic Club. She is a member of the United Church of Christ in Ione and has taught in several local schools including positions in Heppner and Ione. She was most recently the owner and operator of Beecher's restaurant and lounge in Ione.

**Why would a voter select you over your opponent?**

I have always been interested in government since college days when I was president of Women's Affairs Board at William Carey College, Hattiesburg, Mississippi. I thought we needed choices in our selection of commissioner. I would like for the Willow Creek Valley to have an experienced person representing them on the county court. I know how government operates and am familiar with obtaining funds for needed projects. I consider myself to be a moderate person who knows how to gather a consensus and get things done.

**If elected, what is the biggest challenge facing you?**

Left unanswered  
**What major project would you like to see accomplished? What is your first priority?**

If I am elected, a top priority would be to work with all cities in Morrow County to make our county the best in the state. "Working Together Works" and we can accomplish our goals.

**Outline your plan for accommodating growth and other challenges resulting from the proposed Boardman area racetrack.**

Working with each of our five cities to make sure we can accommodate the growth that will come, enough housing, motels, good roads, sewer, infrastructure that is needed in each community. Working with county commissioners, Port of Morrow, city councils to assess each area and form a plan to prioritize and meet this challenge. Work with Martin Davis, Morrow County Economic Development officer.

**What is your plan for drawing businesses/creating jobs in South Morrow County?**

We have been working with Baker/Morrow Partnership for four years to draw businesses to both counties. Community Oregon was here last year to visit Willow Creek Valley and many good ideas came out of that visit. Our industrial area needs to be readied for businesses now. Many caring people are working behind the scenes on projects that will better our communities. Example: Willow Creek Valley Assisted Living in Heppner will open in August.

**Categories for youngsters at the county fair**

Parents: have you been saving your children's crafts and artwork from school? Bring them to the Morrow County Fair on August 12. Some changes have been made for ages seven to 13 in the categories they can enter, so entrants should check the fair premium book for details. It will be available in June.

For the Superkids and Juniors in the family, categories have been added, featuring oil painting and colored marker pictures. In the crafts division, pipe cleaner art, soap crafting and stamp art have been included for the young person's imagination.

Young writers are encouraged to enter the Creative Writing division in the Art Department. Written work may be as short as one sentence or a two-line poem, but no longer than 500 words.

Community members are invited to save any art and craft projects their child does during the summer, whether it is at a vacation school, hands-on-science or at home, and bring them to the fair in August.

**Final American Legion meeting**

American Legion and Auxiliary will meet on Monday, May 20, at the Methodist Church basement at 7 p.m., instead of Monday, May 27.

Officers for the year, 2002-2003, will be installed, and yearly activities will be reported on. This will be the last meeting for the summer and members are asked to attend.

**County Court news**

By Doris Brosnan

Much of the Morrow County Court session on Wednesday, May 1, was needed for a public hearing on the appeal of the Boeing Agricultural Industry Company (BAIC) land partition, which began with a report from Planning Director Tamra Mabbott.

Mabbott reported that the Planning Commission reviewed and approved, with six conditions, the application to partition a tract of approximately 86,000 acres into three parcels. She said that three conditions were appealed: #4- compliance with recommendations of the Emergency Management Director to guarantee adequate access to each parcel; #5- completion of the dedication of the extension road (Boardman-Cecil Road); #6- construction of a roadway along the extension road alignment to a minimum "Rural Access II" standard. Mabbott located on a map the roads in question and explained documents in the Court's packets of information. She entered into record a letter from George Ruby, District 12, encouraging the county to pursue connectivity, the agreement for creation of a conservation area, and the purchase and sale agreement. She explained that she awaits the final survey alignment survey, which needs to be included as a condition.

Attorney Larry Epstein, who has assisted Mabbott in the case and appeared on behalf of the county, passed out copies of his testimony and explained his opinion that the Court does have authority to respond to the appeal. His comments included his review of the authority of the county to adopt regulations governing the partitioning of land and his enumeration of the constraints on conditions of approval, including the constitutional "taking" and "due process" requirements. Epstein reviewed the Planning Commission's concern over lack of a north-south connectivity and addressed the transfer of a parcel to the Nature Conservancy, which would contribute to a lack of connectivity.

Epstein further explained his legal opinions on the conditions placed by the Planning Commission on the partition approval. He said that #4 is not clearly enough described to determine whether its requirement is proportional; #5 requires dedication of a public right of way, to which the applicant has previously agreed; #6 is not adequately analyzed to show evidence of proposed development impacting the need for road improvements or of a proportionality of costs of road improvements.

Epstein, noting that the applicants are entitled to a decision within 180 days, reviewed with the Court positive and negative aspects of seven options and offered his recommendation of a continuance to draft a final decision. The commissioners asked several questions of Epstein.

Testifying on behalf of the applicant, BAIC, Steve Hultburg said that he agreed with several statements by Mr. Epstein. He noted that BAIC's primary issue is over proportionality, that BAIC intends to honor the agreement with the county for a dedicated right of way, and that BAIC does not contend that there will be no further development but that the partition will not result in new development.

Marty Myers, general manager of Threemile Canyon Farms, expressed appreciation for the Court's hearing the matter and added that his company is asking for a partition of an area that will be managed as a conservation area with restriction on development. He added that he thinks the partitioning will hinder future development, and he noted that a significant property tax increase would result from the activities of Threemile Canyon Farms. Myers said that they are prepared to move forward with the dedication of the road and urged the Court to delete #6.

A lengthy discussion among Commissioner Dan Brosnan, Myers, and Hultburg revisited topics previously addressed: litigation over use of water from the Columbia River, BAIC's agreement with the environmental group, and the Ione-Boardman road, which Brosnan noted may lack closure for many years into the future because of its importance to the county. Judge Terry Tallman asked Myers about support for the county's work to get the state's help with the building of the alternate road. Myers noted that they would try to enlist professionals, such as Hultburg, for help in the county's efforts.

Planning Commission Chairman Joel Peterson testified in the hearing as an opponent. He clarified that the commission had made a decision, not a recommendation and that the Ione-Boardman road is part of the county's transportation system plan and remains important to the county. Peterson acknowledged that the partition hearing was not the forum for discussion of that road but wanted to make certain that its being an issue remains clear. He objected to the characterization of the Tower Road extension as a substitute for the north-south Ione-Boardman road, though that road can still be good for the county. He also read a portion of a letter from the Court to the Ione mayor expressing dedication to continuing pursuit of a north-south route when opportunity arises. He thanked the Court for hiring Attorney Epstein. Judge Tallman allowed County Counsel Bill Hanlon to explain the chronology of the Ione-Boardman agreement.

Hultburg recommended that the too-broad condition #4 be redrafted, agreeing that its compliance should be proportional, that #5 be retained, and that #6 be stricken. The hearing closed.

Commissioner Brosnan explained conclusions he had reached, based on Attorney Epstein's written evidence and the hearing's testimony: for legal reasons, he felt that the Court's one option was to agree to Hultburg's recommendations. Tallman agreed and noted a "tremendous learning curve" on the issue. Brosnan also recommended keeping the record open for seven days, to allow Joel Peterson to submit a summarization of his testimony, and the Court agreed. It also set Wednesday, May 15, for the final hearing in Boardman at 10 a.m.

Epstein suggested that the emergency management director provide clarification for the redrafting of #4 and suggested asking the applicant to grant access, though not a road improvement - which he thinks would not be proportionately supportable - for emergency purposes on the south 23,000 acres. Hultburg said that BAIC would grant an easement to the border of that protected parcel. Wayne Downey of DEQ reported several existing roadways available for emergency access to parcel 2. Myers noted a way to provide access on the eastern central side of the conservation area around the Carty reservoir, graded to the last row of circles. Hultburg suggested an easement be granted for emergency service on an existing road, and the Court agreed to have staff complete the redrafting in advance of the May 15 hearing.

The Court reviewed some proposed changes in the county fees schedule, discussed them in length, and agreed to revisit the proposals at the next meeting.

Sheriff Verlin Denton shared with the Court a report of reserve officers' hours to help demonstrate the department's use of tippage fees. The 582 hours of work since January 2002 represents nine volunteer reserves, Denton explained. He said that the department is training more reserves now, including two persons certified in tracking and drug searches, with a canine qualified for drug searches. He suggested that the quality of the program is now attracting excellent candidates. Denton also reported to the Court that he has been appointed representative of District Three to the Oregon State Sheriff's Associa

Assistant Public Works Director Bob Nairns reported to the Court that the crew has been stockpiling chip rock on roads to be chip sealed, has removed two unneeded cattle guards from Halvorsen and Holtz Lanes, has installed two culverts on Eight Mile Road and is now putting base rock on the sides of that roadway, and will be patching Liberty School Road. He said that the department is looking to repair some deterioration on Little Butter Creek Road and will start patching paved roads as soon as the chip sealing projects have been completed. Rest of meeting will be reported in next week's

**Wedding Tables**  
Toni Kemp and Travis Parish  
Saturday, June 1st

Brenda Holtz and David Long  
Shower: Saturday, May 25th  
Wedding: Saturday, June 22nd

Jessica Maben and Josh Roy  
Saturday, June 29th  
at the Glavey Ranch

Sheila Dunaway and Brian Price  
Saturday, July 13th at 1 p.m.  
McKay Park, Pendleton

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