

County commission candidates discuss range of topics

Eight candidates vying for three open seats

By Jack Heffernan
EO Media Group

At a forum that covered a range of Clatsop County issues, a few seemed to be a priority for candidates and spectators alike: job creation, emergency preparedness, a November jail bond, housing and the environment.

Eight candidates for three seats on the county Board of Commissioners in the May election gathered Tuesday, April 3, for a forum at Astoria High School sponsored by the American Association of University Women and The Daily Astorian.

Commissioner Lianne Thompson is facing challenger Susana Gladwin — a Jewell farmer — in the race for the District 5 seat, which encompasses Cannon Beach and much of the South Coun-



COLIN MURPHEY/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Candidates running for Clatsop County commissioner take their seats.

ty. Both discussed housing, economic development and emergency preparedness — three topics Thompson has

often highlighted at commission meetings, as well. The most specific proposals from each candidate came in a dis-

cussion about preparedness for a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami.

Thompson said it is critical to train residents in disaster preparation, build up supplies and establish relationships with other at-risk counties. She mentioned her attendance at statewide conferences, which has drawn criticism from other commissioners due to her travel expenses, as useful in this context.

“We have friends all over the state to help us,” Thompson said.

Gladwin said she was isolated for four days on her Jewell farm in 1996 due to flooding on the Nehalem River. She said Seaside needs bicycle evacuation drills, bridges and more truck routes out of cities.

“We plan constantly about how as a community we will survive because we know we’ll be isolated after a bad earthquake and the bridges are down,” she said.

Both Thompson and Gladwin largely avoided addressing a question about the upcoming bond measure that would relocate and expand

the county jail at a cost of more than \$20 million. Most of the other candidates supported the need for a new jail with the exception of McCartin, who questioned whether such an expense is justified.

Candidates to replace Commissioner Lisa Clement in District 3 are Peter Roscoe — a former restaurateur and Astoria city councilor — Doug Thompson — a property manager and also a former Astoria city councilor — and Pamela Wev — an Astoria land use planning consultant.

In District 1, Mark Kujala — owner of Skipanon Brand Seafood and a former Warrenton mayor — George McCartin — a retired attorney and regular presence at public meetings — and Andy Davis — a medical data analyst — are vying for the seat being vacated by Scott Lee, the board’s chairman. While each candidate listed some specific points of interest, they all agreed on one area in need of change: the commission’s functionality.

State House candidates appeal to voters

Several compete to replace Boone

By Edward Stratton
The Daily Astorian

The five hopefuls to replace state Rep. Deborah Boone in state House District 32 pitched themselves to voters Tuesday in a candidate forum at Astoria High School.

Three Democrats are running in the May primary, including Tillamook County Commissioner Tim Josi and political newcomers John Orr and Tiffany Mitchell.

Josi, who served in the state House from 1991 to 1998 and the last 20 years on the Tillamook County Commission, has come out as the early front-runner with the broadest name recognition and biggest campaign coffer. He touted his experience and how he has been reacquainting himself with people in the district.

“I served this area, and the people who remember me know it’s not what you do in Salem,” Josi said. “It’s what you do when you’re in the district.”

Orr, a local lawyer, called himself the true progressive candidate of the race, noting his experience leading the North Coast Land Conservancy, working at recycling company Trails End Recovery, running a local legal practice for 24 years and serving as a municipal judge in Gearhart for more than 20 years.

“I know firsthand the issues that face the people who



COLIN MURPHEY/EO MEDIA GROUP

Candidates prepare to answer questions from the audience in Astoria.

live here and work here,” Orr said. “I know how laws affect people.”

Mitchell, a case management coordinator for the state Department of Human Services, moved to Oregon from Utah in 2015 and jumped into the race after local college adviser Melissa Ousley dropped out.

An activist with progressive group Indivisible North Coast Oregon, Mitchell has cast herself as a candidate for the working class. “I’m going to be that voice that will fight for all of you in Salem,” she said.

Vineeta Lower, an educator with the Oregon Virtual Academy, is the sole Republican candidate after the withdrawal of Banks contractor Gene Stout. She touted her education experience and said the state needs to focus more on developing trades programs and internships to increase student engagement.

Brian Halvorsen, a com-

munity organizer who founded North Coast Progressives last year, has filed as an Independent and focused his campaign on economic fairness, environmental justice and campaign finance reform.

Asked how they would address school safety, the three Democratic candidates and Halvorsen focused on stricter gun laws and improved mental health services. While a ban of assault-style weapons would be unlikely to pass constitutional muster because of operational similarities with a hunting rifle, Orr said, he supports intensive yearly mental health screenings for students. As a former teacher, Lower said, schools need to focus on bullying.

All candidates except for Lower supported reworking the tax system to provide more revenue for services. Mitchell, Orr and Halvorsen specifically supported raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations. Lower said the

focus should be on trimming government waste.

All candidates voiced support for a national popular vote for president except for Lower, who seemed unsure, and all supported some form of campaign finance reform. Halvorsen said the state should move toward a similar model of partial public financing found in Portland, where municipal candidates starting next year can agree to limit private fundraising in exchange for a public match.

Each candidate was given a chance to voice a top priority.

“If we don’t have housing for the people who want to work in our communities, we’re going to grind this economy down to a halt,” Josi said.

Orr focused on raising taxes on the wealthy rather than the middle class to stabilize funding. “Until we do this, we will accomplish nothing,” he said.

Mitchell, recounting how her parents’ insurance was able to pay for treatment of her brain tumor as a child, focused on the need for affordable health care. “No one should have to worry about their own finances when they’re sick,” she said. “They should be focused on getting better.”

Lower decried the condition of Northwest Oregon’s highways, calling for more infrastructure investments.

Halvorsen called for economic fairness. “We need to level the playing field between the rich and the working class,” he said.



BRENNA VISSER/EO MEDIA GROUP

State Rep. Deborah Boone and state Sen. Betsy Johnson talk at a town hall at Seaside City Hall.

Johnson, Boone hold Seaside town hall

Climate change, emergency preparedness, tax reform addressed

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette

Climate change, emergency preparedness and other topics were on the minds of residents who came to City Hall on Saturday, March 31, to ask state Sen. Betsy Johnson and Rep. Deborah Boone questions.

With retirement on the horizon for Boone, some quizzed her about the future of emergency preparedness, her legacy issue.

One of those constituents was Tiffany Mitchell, a candidate running for state House District 32 — Boone’s soon-to-be former seat.

“I come from Utah, where we have similar issues living on a fault line,” Mitchell said. “Then I moved here and I felt I was moving from one community with emergency planning issues to another facing the same issues. What do you think needs to still happen

to make sure this area is prepared?”

Boone, D-Cannon Beach, mostly reflected on progress the state has made, including legislation that created the Oregon Resilience Plan following the 2011 Japanese tsunami, as well as a bill that allows retired medical professionals to practice in Medical Reserve Corps like the ones in Cannon Beach and Manzanita.

Most of the success Boone said she has seen has been on a local level with neighborhood mapping efforts and preparedness groups.

“They’ve taken the wand in the relay here and are putting these ideas into place,” Boone said.

Johnson, D-Scappoose, emphasized a need for clear messaging when it comes to responding to a disaster, after a tsunami watch issued for the Oregon Coast in January caused local confusion.

In a separate interview, Boone said she sees the future of emergency planning in promoting relocation projects like the Seaside School District is embarking upon, as well as supporting more dual-purpose, resiliency-based development.

Local activist, advocate begins state House campaign

Mitchell running for Boone’s seat

By Edward Stratton
The Daily Astorian

When Melissa Ousley dropped out of the state House race to replace retiring state Rep. Deborah Boone, Tiffany Mitchell said she felt like there was no longer a candidate quite representing her views.

So Mitchell became the third to file in the Democratic primary in May for state House District 32, along with Tillamook County Commissioner Tim Josi and local attorney John Orr. She kicked her campaign off Monday amid a packed taproom at

Buoy Beer Co.

“When she dropped out of the race, I felt this void that really needed to be represented,” Mitchell said of Ousley. “I listened to the other two candidates, and it’s not that they’re not good people. They just didn’t represent my values or the values of so many other people that I had talked

ed to that had also expressed that same regret that Melissa dropped out.”

Mitchell is a case management coordinator for the state Department of Human Services who moved to Oregon from Utah in 2015 with her husband, who works for Pacific Power. She is an organizer with progressive activist

group Indivisible North Coast Oregon and has focused her campaign on broader social policies such as affordable housing, health care, reproductive health, stable education funding and equal pay. She has received endorsements from a variety of labor, education, women’s and conservation groups.

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