

School district: Two competitive races

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Elementary School and Broadway Middle School. She taught high school biology in the Renton, Washington, School District for 10 years.

Also in an uncontested race, Mark Truax, president of the board and holding 20 years experience with the school district, is running for Zone 4, Position 2, based in Seaside. He is a Seaside High School graduate and Astoria firefighter.

Clatsop Community College board

Incumbent Andrea Mazzarella and challenger Sara Meyer, candidates for the Clatsop Community College Board, shared many similar views in a candidate forum on May 4, albeit from different backgrounds.

They are running for Zone 2, Position 2, which covers Astoria and outlying neighborhoods.

Also at the forum was Karen Burke, a former nurse and instructor who is running unopposed for Zone 1, Position 1, covering much of the eastern portion of Clatsop County. The college’s two positions covering South County and Warrenton have no candidates and will likely be decided by write-in campaigns.

Mazzarella, 38, spent more than 20 years in the service industry before becoming a real estate agent and delving into community service. She was in the college’s Upward Bound high school enrichment program, used its Small Business Development Center when starting a small business and studies in its historic preservation program.

She was appointed to the college board in January 2018 to replace Patrick Wingard, and also serves on the Astoria Budget Committee. The May election is to fill out the remaining two years of Wingard’s term.

Meyer, 74, came to Astoria in the 1970s with her husband, Chuck. She worked at the Tongue Point Job Corps Center and opened the Compleat Photographer with her husband in 1977, running it for 40 years.

She served on the Astoria School Board from 1976 to 1980 and the college board from 1996 to 2000. She has a bachelor’s degree from the University of Oregon.



Shannon Swedenborg



John Dunzer



Sondra Gomez



Jeremy Mills



Mark Truax

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

Why I am running for school board

Seaside Signal

**Shannon Swedenborg
Zone 1, Position 1**

I am running for school board because I have two children that currently attend Seaside Heights Elementary so I have a vested interest in the success of our schools. I am a former high school teacher and I have a passion for education. I feel I can give valuable input to the board. The building of the new school is a huge project and I would like to be involved in some way. I feel this is a great way for me to give back to the community.

**John Dunzer
Zone 5, Position 1**

— Make sure every student is on a path to graduate and educationally equipped to lead a successful life.

— Provide highly competitive pay for classroom teachers

— Ensure the community provides the resources to protect and enrich students when they are not on campus

— Implement a strong response to bullying

— Pursue financial policies which provide an outstanding return on

the communities investment in their schools.

— Develop a sense of happiness and moral value in students and faculty as a result of their interaction with the school district.

**Sondra Gomez
Zone 5, Position 1**

Investing in our youth, public service workers, and community is essential. It is my top priority to ensure that each student is served in the best capacity based on their individual needs; understanding that providing support to our school employees is the foundation for student success.

Our district functions like a family, full of heart. I want to support the progress and success our district has achieved. I am excited about the direction the district is headed, with a strong focus on school attendance, family/community engagement, and preparing students for their future. It is important to me that we keep the education, safety and well-being of each student at the forefront of our decisions.

I have 12+ years in education, specifically in student support services. My family means the world to me and

I look at each day as something worth celebrating. It is an honor to currently be serving on the Seaside school board, and appreciate your support to continue to serve in the Zone 5 school board position.

**Jeremy Mills
Zone 5, Position 1**

For years our focus as a family and as a business has been to do everything we can to help strengthen, mentor and inspire our local kids so that they can move forward confidently into a better future. My wife and I feel this is a natural progression for us and I am excited for this next opportunity to help our community’s children.

**Mark Truax
Zone 4, Position 2**

I am a 25-year firefighter in the city of Astoria. I am just finishing my 20th year on the school board, with four years on the budget committee before that. I’m seeking re-election to finish what’s in front of us:

1. The new campus.
2. Putting the strategic plan to work.
3. Transitioning from Superintendent Sheila Roley to Susan Penrod.

Transit district races draw new blood

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The May election for the Sunset Empire Transportation District Board has drawn several new candidates hoping to help guide the bus agency’s growth.

In Position 1, incumbent Tracy MacDonald, a retired paramedic, is facing Larry Taylor, a retired technology worker and former chairman of the Clatsop County Democrats.

MacDonald, 68, retired from Medix Ambulance Service, drove for Schwan’s Food Service and provided senior on-call transportation for Sunset Empire before joining the board four years ago.

As a driver for Schwan’s, MacDonald said, he witnessed firsthand people without cars or too old to drive isolated in rural areas, an issue he hoped to help alleviate.

Taylor, 66, recently retired from the technology sector, including a stint at Intel. He ran for Astoria mayor in 2014, losing to



Tracy MacDonald



Larry Taylor

POSITION 1

Arline LaMear.

“The kinds of things that the board needs in terms of oversight and analysis is really similar to what I did at intel,” he said.

In Position 2, retired 911 dispatcher Lylla Gaebel is facing Debbie Boothe-Schmidt, a trial assistant with the Clatsop County District Attorney’s Office and co-owner of Phog Bounders Antique Mall in Astoria.

Gaebel, 73, a former Clatsop County commissioner and Warrenton city commissioner, has been on the transportation district’s board about six of the past 10 years. Her goal is to ensure public transportation is available for seniors and low-income residents unable to drive, she said.

“As I’m growing older



Lylla Gaebel



Debbie Boothe-Schmidt

POSITION 2

now, I know there’s going to come a day when I can’t drive anymore, and I want to make sure public transportation is there and available for me,” Gaebel said.

Boothe-Schmidt, 64, said she was looking for another volunteer opportunity for when she steps down as president of the local American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union.

“When I started looking at open positions, I was interested in rural law enforcement, but that’s a conflict of interest with the DA’s office,” she said. “I’d like to see more ridership on the buses ... more community outreach if possible.”

After temporarily facing the loss of nearly half his operating budget during the

recent federal government shutdown, Jeff Hazen, the transit district’s executive director, is overseeing an expanding agency buffeted by a statewide payroll tax expected to provide an additional \$1.4 million annually.

Candidates are hopeful the district can expand service in rural areas, and that technology such as Wi-Fi on buses and online scheduling can entice more riders.

McDonald hopes to see more investment in on-demand transportation, such as Dial-A-Ride, while focusing on on-time arrivals and clean buses.

Sunset Empire recently experienced a significant data loss that ultimately cost the agency more than \$60,000. Taylor wants to focus on tightening the bus agency’s procedures to avoid such situations, while digging into metrics to see where it can best serve riders.

“I think that technology will definitely help,” Gaebel said of increasing ridership. “If we had Wi-Fi on the bus, I think that’s something people would definitely like to have.”

Port of Astoria candidates meet in election forum

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Port of Astoria Commissioner Bill Hunsinger touted his experience and criticism of what he sees as ineffective Port management at a candidate forum on Saturday, while Scott McClaine, his challenger in the May election, stressed he would bring fresh eyes.

The two are running for a four-year term in Position 3 on the Port Commission. Commissioner Robert Stevens, a retired Coast Guard captain, is running unopposed for Position 4.

Hunsinger, a commercial fisherman and former longshoreman, has been on the Port Commission for 12 years. McClaine, the owner of an online coin shop and a Coast Guard veteran, recently quit his job as a security guard at the Port to campaign against Hunsinger.

The Port is in dire financial straits, with staff estimating more than \$20 million in maintenance on decaying infrastructure and barely enough money to cover operating costs.



Scott McClaine



Bill Hunsinger

“I want to thank Commissioner Hunsinger for his 12 years of service to the Port. It’s seen both good and bad,” McClaine said at the forum, which was held at the Bob Chisholm Community Center and Sponsored by Clatsop County Democrats. “But I want to say that I think I bring a set of fresh eyes to the Port. I’ve been known for thinking outside the box.”

Hunsinger pointed to his experience with the Port, along with the fishing and shipping industries, as giving him credibility. He has been the biggest critic of Port management and has said Port Executive Director Jim Knight should resign or be fired.

“I’ve seen the Port at its very best, and I’ve seen the Port go a different direction,” he said. “The reason I’m running again is I’d like

to turn things around.”

A volunteer committee of financial professionals has recommended a more proactive Port management and the sale of multiple properties to help fix decaying docks and keep the agency solvent.

Hunsinger at first said he is totally opposed to selling public property to make up for managerial mistakes. But he later stated his willingness to sell the Astoria Regional Airport, which loses money operationally but brings in the vast majority of the Port’s federal grants.

McClaine said the Port needs to study the finance committee’s recommendations. Selling buildings, but not the land underneath, could be a good option, he said.

The Port recently shut down a causeway over the East Mooring Basin after an inspection by state engineers found a significantly rotted substructure, leaving several boat owners without access to their vessels. Asked how they would balance safety with servicing customers, Hunsinger said the Port needs a more experienced grant writer to seek government support.

The Port Commission has long been beset by squabbling, much of it related to Hunsinger’s constant criticism of the agency’s staff and Knight. Asked about making commission meetings more cordial, Hunsinger started with a laugh in recognition of his self-appointed position as a whistler.

“You all know I am,” he said. “I don’t like watching public dollars be spent recklessly, throwing money away. And that’s what they do.”

The Port Commission should resemble a family, McClaine said, with unity in public and disagreements hashed out privately.

“Live debate is not good,” he said.

The Port’s largest source of revenue is from charges to log ships exporting timber for Astoria Forest Products, a business nearly halted by tariffs amid a trade war between the U.S. and China. McClaine credited Hunsinger’s role in attracting a log exporter to Astoria, but recommended the Port look beyond logs.



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