

More from the candidates

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the North County who also feels that way, people now feel free to call me with those types of concerns. They think the outlying areas are represented well.

Luttrell – Try to open up communication. I lived in Vernonia for 3-1/2 years. Need to try to get residents to share their needs, or call and let us know. Preheim – Vernonia is part of the county and needs services too. I know Clatskanie has the same feeling. I'd like to have meetings in these community during hours when people can attend. One thing that bothers me is that the current county commissioners only meet at 10 a.m. on Wednesdays while 86% of the county's residents commute. We want to have meetings at night and move them around.

7. What do you see as the most important issue for county commissioners at this time?

Fisher – The biggest issue is finance, absolutely finance. We have worked hard to get OR-PET, PCC, Port Westward. But when you have to cut \$2 million out of the budget – that's people, that's services.

Luttrell – The budget. There is less and less money and demand for service isn't going down. I'm very concerned about services for veterans and seniors. You have to make a priority list and do the best you can with what you have. I have been on the Port's [Port of St. Helens] budget committee and the audit committee, so I have knowledge in those areas.

Preheim – Resolving the hospital district problem. I hope that gets resolved before the next county commissioners take their seats in January. Also, the budget, the sheriff's office, jobs, the economy and tax abatements to try to get jobs – like PGE building a plant with only two jobs but having a 15-year, \$33 million tax abatement. \$33 million for two jobs is not a good idea. Also, there is a \$2 million budget shortfall and there are problems with collecting the mineral depletion monies.

8. Why should Vernonians vote for you?

Fisher – I'm the candidate most qualified, both by background,

experience and temperament. I think I've been responsive to the community. I've talked to Ken Cox, I've had calls from past Vernonia Mayors and have helped. I've made sure that those [who live] 15 or more miles out of St. Helens have had my attention. We're concerned about all citizens, regardless of where they live.

Luttrell – I have a heart for Vernonia. I know what the flooding is like. I have a soft spot for Vernonia, having lived there.

Preheim – I think it's time for change. In particular, the person from Vernonia has been there 20 years. I'm dedicated to doing things differently and having an open door policy. If you think the current county commissioners have been doing a good job, okay, but if not it's time for twoforchange.info.

9. Anything else you'd like to tell our readers (plans, directions, etc.)?

Fisher – The key to making it through the next 3-5 years – state economists project 3-5 more years of difficult times – is to get cooperation in order to solve the problems that real people have.

Luttrell – If elected, you can count on me to be a man of honesty, integrity and hard work. I've worked in the woods and I know what that's like. I'd appreciate Vernonians' support.

Preheim – I'd like to see us try to do something for small businesses. Small businesses are the backbone of our county economy, not big businesses. One idea is to allow group policies through the chamber of commerce. I'd like to see a separate group (like in Lincoln County) do this through a Shop Local program.

About the Candidates for Position 1:

Earl Fisher has been a school teacher, principal and then superintendent at Clatskanie before retiring in 2001. He then started doing community work. In 2008 he was elected to Commissioner Position 1. He lives in Clatskanie with his wife of 43 years, Margaret.

Terry Luttrell grew up in St. Helens and on a farm on Deer Island. He has been a pastor since 1979, a position that has taken him to many parts of Oregon. He has worked as a

school superintendent and for many years as a journeyman mechanic at Boise before retiring in 1981. He returned to St. Helens in 2002 to serve as pastor at the Columbia Christian Center. He and his wife, Susan, have three grown children and two grandchildren. He has served on the Port Commission and is on the County Planning Commission.

Brady Norman Preheim

grew up in Columbia County, graduating from St. Helens High School in 1982. He went to OSU for a couple years, then got a summer job in South Carolina, before getting a job at a computer store in Washington, D.C. in 1984, where he eventually started his own computer business. He returned to Oregon in 1997, worked for a while at Intel, then opened Preheim Computers which will celebrate

15 years of operation on July 1.

DON'T MARK YOUR BALLOTS YET!
The Columbia County commissioner candidates for Position 3 will be featured in the May 2 issue.

Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer, General Manager, West Oregon Electric Cooperative



We have Liftoff!

The long wait is finally over and we have begun work on two projects simultaneously. The undergrounding and system work for the new Vernonia School and the new Substation both started on the 9th of April.

It never ceases to amaze me the amount of time, money, and effort it takes to do all of the preliminary paperwork, go through all of the governmental bureaucracies, and the many processes to get something built. After more than a year of work, we finally have all of the permits and paperwork completed to begin construction of the new main substation in Vernonia. The new substation will take about six months to complete and will entail building a new substation structure at our pole yard facility, which sits well above the flood plain. The transformers for the new substation were paid for by a federal earmark of \$475,000 that we received due to the efforts of Senator Ron Wyden, and then Senator Gordon Smith and Representative David Wu. The project will also entail constructing new transmission lines from Hwy 47 up to the substation, and undergrounding transmission lines along Hwy 47 and down the linear trail through Anderson Park. It is the largest substation project in West Oregon history and will provide for both the current and future needs of Vernonia and the surrounding areas, and will increase system reliability and longevity.

The new Vernonia School project is at the stage of working on the roads, sidewalks, and utility lines going to the school. We will be undergrounding lines to the new school from the highway and are coordinating efforts with the construction crews, ODOT, and other utilities to make this happen on time for the school to open this fall.

We have secured the lien release from Rural Utility Ser-

vices (RUS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture on our old facility and, once signatures from Cooperative Finance Corporation are received, we will have the documents recorded. Once recorded, we will be completing the sale of the facilities and property to FEMA, who will then have 90 days to complete demolition of the buildings. The property will then be turned over to the City of Vernonia, which is restricted to use it as a park, parking lot, or a community garden, but the site can never be built on again as it is in the flood plain. The proceeds of the sale of the old facilities and property will be applied directly to the loan for the new facilities. We will begin work on the remainder of Cougar Street and Rose Avenue, starting May 7th to complete the new facilities project.

It is a busy time at WOEC, but then again, it always seems to be a busy place here. Hopefully, the last of the winter storms are over and we can get back to our regular projects and work. We will be replacing some poles that our inspections have shown are marginal, continuing our tree trimming program, and repairs to the system, along with our regular maintenance work. We are proud to serve the members of West Oregon and appreciate the opportunity to do so.

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