

ELECTION 2015

Candidates sound off on county's growth management plan

Hopefuls for chair position divided, especially on Madore's Alternative 4

By KAITLIN GILLESPIE
Columbian staff writer

Updates to Clark County's comprehensive growth management plan have the field for Clark County council chair divided.

At the crux of the debate is Councilor David Madore's Alternative 4, which Madore has said will recognize existing parcels in

rural Clark County. Alternative 4, if implemented, will reduce the minimum size of some rural, forestry or agriculture lots, allowing landowners to subdivide their properties to sell, give to their families or develop.

Opponents of the plan — which include land-use

CHAIR, Page C3

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is one of a series of stories exploring county council candidates' views on local issues.

To read more of the series: Visit www.columbian.com/election

It will be of particular importance to District 2 as area grows

By KAITLIN GILLESPIE
Columbian staff writer

Candidates from Clark County council District 2 say the region, which stretches from the Hazel Dell area to the northern border of the county, is in a unique position when it comes to growth management.

The district is home to farms, suburbs and Ridge-

field, Washington's fastest-growing city. Growth management will be particularly important to the area as its population increases, perhaps more so than all other areas of the county, according to the candidates.

Here are talking points on growth management from the five candidates.

DISTRICT 2, Page C3

Chair

From Page C1

activists, farmers and top officials of cities in Clark County — say Alternative 4 could kill the potential for job growth, strain public resources, raise taxes and pave the way for thousands of "McMansions" across the county.

Alternative 4, however, is only one of the four alternatives to the plan. The first will make no changes to Clark County's zoning. The second will make some changes to rural and urban areas, including decreasing minimum lot size in some places. The third will draw some new lands into Battle Ground, La Center, Ridgefield and Washougal.

The county will likely adopt a preferred alternative, which could contain pieces of each alternative, in

October.

Here are talking points on key issues surrounding the comprehensive growth management plan update from the council chair candidates:

■ **Tom Mielke, Republican:** Mielke praised Alternative 4, saying it's the best option for rural landowners.

■ **Jeanne Stewart, Republican:** Stewart, who voted to move all four alternatives on to environmental review, said she fears Alternative 4 would have "unintended consequences."

"I look forward to seeing the experts give us feedback and the (environmental impact statement)," she said.

The draft environmental impact statement, which will detail what impacts all four alternatives will have on Clark County, is scheduled to come out Aug. 5 — a day after the primary election.

Stewart also said she

was concerned that the Office of Financial Management's projection for Clark County's 20-year population growth is too small. The office indicates Clark County will have 562,207 people by 2035.

The OFM last month, meanwhile, announced that Clark County is the second-fastest-growing county in the state, growing by 9,020 people between April 1, 2014, and April 1, 2015, for an overall population of 451,820. If that trend continues, Clark County's population will reach about 676,000 people, far exceeding the office's original projection for 2035.

"Our growth rate expectations are substantially understated," she said.

■ **David Madore, Republican:** Madore declined to respond to questions about his campaign.

He is the author and lead champion of Alternative 4.

"Alternative 4 proposes

to correct the massive mismatch between the actual rural land and the inappropriate zoning map that was imposed 20 years ago," Madore posted on his Facebook page in April.

■ **Mike Dalesandro, Democrat:** Dalesandro said, "I do not support Alt. 4," criticizing the atypical process of a single councilor — Madore — writing the alternative.

"This all stems from leadership and leadership style," he said. "We need to make sure we're leading and not controlling."

He also said the county will open itself to legal challenges and may even be in violation of the Growth Management Act if it adopts Alternative 4.

"The GMA is not perfect, but it's the law of the land," he said.

The State Department of Commerce won't comment on county growth management plans before they're submitted, so it's unclear

if Alternative 4 will violate state law.

Dalesandro said he most supports Alternative 3, which will increase the urban growth boundaries of several of Clark County's small cities — including Battle Ground, where Dalesandro is a sitting city councilor.

■ **Marc Boldt, no party preference:** Boldt believes Alternative 4 will be "thrown out" once it reaches the state, he said. Boldt said it was created without communication with the cities or core planning principles in mind.

Boldt also criticized Madore for developing the alternative instead of letting county planning staff do it.

"I believe in the intent," Boldt said. "But the way he's handled it, he's alienated everyone."

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District 2

From Page C1

■ **Chuck Green, Democrat:** Green has called for a "value-based" approach to Clark County's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan update.

If elected, Green said he will vote to implement Alternative 1 — which makes no

changes to county zoning. He'll also pursue a collaborative plan involving local land-use groups — Clark County Citizens United and Friends of Clark County, for example — along with city representatives and planners.

■ **Mike Pond, Democrat:** Pond called for throwing out Councilor David Madore's Alternative 4, saying it will create strip malls and suburban sprawl across the county.

"Every mayor in the county is opposed to it," he said.

Pond said he wants the county to request a deadline extension from the state Department of Commerce on the plan update, which is supposed to be submitted and approved by June 30, 2016.

■ **Mary Benton, Republican:** Benton, who returned a request for comment via email, said Clark County needs to "maximize the options that allow citizens to have the most flexibility" with their property.

"It is not right that property owners can build in the

cities but that those in rural areas have their hands tied with what they can do with their land," Benton.

When asked for additional information and clarification, Benton did not respond.

■ **Tanner Martin, no party preference:** Martin said while planning staff should have taken a stronger hand in the creation of Alternative 4, the county still needs to consider the rights of rural property owners. Martin said it would make him "irate" if the government tried to control use of his land.

"These people moved there," he said. "They've been there for a very long time. We're coming in and changing their way of life."

■ **Julie Olson, Republican:** Olson took a gentler approach to growth management than her opponents, saying she wants to wait to see what the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement says before judging Alternative 4 or any other plan.

What will be important for the county is striking a balance between private property rights and the need for economic development in cities.

"Is Alt. 4 the answer? Most likely probably not," she said. "But I'm willing to talk about what might be."

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