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SATURDAY, JULY 4, 2015 • \$1.00



## 3 in council chair race aim to set selves apart

Councilor Stewart critical of Madore, Mielke actions

By KAITLIN GILLESPIE  
Columbian staff writer

For three of the five candidates for Clark County council chair, the race for the top seat seems to be all about distancing themselves from the current administration.

During a meeting Friday with The Columbian's editorial board, three chair candidates — Jeanne Stewart, Republican, Mike Dalesandro, Democrat, and Marc Boldt, independent — spent a large part of the discussion trying to set themselves apart from sitting councilors and chair candidates David Madore and Tom Mielke.

Neither Madore nor Mielke, both of them Republicans, attended Friday's meeting.

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## Candidates

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All five are running for the new leadership position created by a home-rule charter approved by Clark County voters last November. The chair is the only position on the county council elected at-large, and will be responsible for leading meetings, as well as representing the council as its spokesperson.

The five candidates will appear on the Aug. 4 primary ballot, and the top two finishers will advance to the Nov. 3 general election, regardless of party.

### Building relationships

All three candidates emphasized the importance of restoring order to the council, while rebuilding relationships with community organizations and the county's cities.

Perhaps most telling, however, was the criticism from Stewart, who is also a



On the Web  
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county councilor. Stewart, who said she's been working to improve relationships with organizations like the Columbia River Economic Development Council, said her fellow councilors are focused on their own desires rather than the needs of county residents.

"My experience, increasingly, is that it is not a 'we' situation," she said. "It's: 'I want.' I fully recognize that by saying that, it will be on the tape, and there will be repercussions. It is the truth."

When pressed further, Stewart blamed Madore and Mielke by name for souring relationships with many of the county's key partners.

"I believe the way they have gone about doing things has created that poor relationship," she said.

"We need to work in partnership with the rest of the county," Stewart said.

Dalesandro, a current Battle Ground city councilor, said county relationships have "been on a downward spiral for several years."

Dalesandro also accused the county of attempting to poach jobs and stifle growth, pointing to Madore's proposed Alternative 4 of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan update. The zoning plan



LOU BRANCACCIO/The Columbian

Clark County council chair candidates, from left, Mike Dalesandro, Marc Boldt and Jeanne Stewart meet with The Columbian's editorial board Friday.

would recognize existing parcels in rural areas, while also allowing some property owners to further subdivide their land.

All of Clark County's cities have protested the plan, which might be adopted later this year, claiming it will strangle their ability to grow and attract job-building companies.

"We're all in this together," Dalesandro said. "All these jurisdictions need to

work together."

Boldt, a former commissioner, also called for improving relationships, saying the county needs to allow the cities to pursue their interests without interfering. He gave the example of C-Tran's bus rapid transit program, saying it's not up to the county to attempt to interfere in city policies.

"I may not really fully understand Vancouver's position," Boldt said. "They still

have a position, they're still elected."

Those relationships run two ways, however.

"I think so C-Tran pokes David Madore sometimes," he said. "Regardless how you feel, it's not very good to poke a pit bull sometimes."

### Fee waiver

Dalesandro and Boldt both called for an end to Clark County's fee waiver

program, which exempts nonresidential developers from paying building and traffic-impact fees.

Dalesandro said he fears the program will eventually become "citizen-subsidized growth," adding that the county will eventually have to tap its general fund to make up for the fee waivers.

"It's not working as it's intended to work, so it needs to go," Dalesandro said.

Boldt said the program puts unfair burden on residential developers, who continue to pay fees in unincorporated Clark County. The county could be opening itself for legal threats, he said.

"They have legal representation," Boldt said. Sooner or later, they're going to say, 'We're paying too much and we want our money back.'"

Stewart, meanwhile, said while the intention of the program may have been good, it needs to be reevaluated. The program has put unfair burden on residential developers, and is not building many family-wage jobs.

"I think going forward we need to look at potentially modifying it," she said.

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