

# VOTE VOTE VOTE

# Citizens News

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## Time for a Reality Check

By Mayre Flowers

With Election Day just around the corner and concerns about the economy on everyone's mind these days, it's a good time for a reality check. A good place to start is by looking at some of the leadership challenges that will shape the Flathead's future. We have identified four challenges to consider as you go to the polls this fall. We hope this review will help you evaluate the goals and promises of candidates for office this November. Now is the time to ask which leaders are up to these challenges. Communities and counties in Montana and the Intermountain West are making smart growth goals a reality. Leadership is the key ingredient to their success.

At issue in this election is not *should* we grow, but *how* should we grow. The election outcome this fall will be significant as it will determine the leaders who will have a direct hand in shaping how we grow. The day after the election, however, will be equally important. For not only do we have a representative democracy, but the Montana Constitution guarantees and is grounded in a robust participatory democracy. From this perspective, these leadership challenges are shared challenges and require the public's vigilance and participation every day!


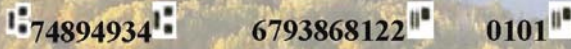
### **Challenge #1 Transparency—Follow the Money!**

The principal of transparency is fundamental to a participatory democracy. Be wary of potential leaders who don't embrace transparency. Equally important is the need to be wary of those who don't have clear plans to implement greater transparency in local government during their term of office.

Taxpayers deserve to know where and how their tax dollars are spent and to see comparative trends over

periods of time. Unfortunately, this information is rarely available to the public. Details or analysis of expenses or income for departments or projects are the most difficult to find. Even copies of their annual budgets for easy reference are not online for the three cities. Flathead County, with its new web site, is to be commended for being the first to have its budget online.

When we conducted a Cost of Services Study in Flathead County a number of years ago, to see if new growth was paying its way, we offered to have our consultant work with the county to implement a simple system that could generate an annual cost of services report. Such annual reports, we suggested, coupled with benchmarks measuring progress towards county goals, in order to assure cost-effective growth, would be simple

DATE <u>November 4, 2008</u> <i>Reality Check</i>		101
PAY TO THE ORDER OF	<u>Future Citizens of the Flathead Valley</u>	\$ <u>Priceless</u>
	<u>Clean Water • Natural Beauty • Friendly Communities</u>	DOLLARS
	<b>MoneyInstructor.com Bank</b> 1221 Main Street Anywhere, US 10001	
FOR	<u>Our Children's Children</u>	<u>Flathead County Commissioners</u>
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and important to put in place. Unfortunately, the county rejected our offer.

Transparency should extend to all areas of government including making all development applications available online when submitted and having a strong open meeting policy so that decision-making is a public process not tainted by private meetings with a "select few."

### **Challenge #2 Vision—Hold Fast and Be Accountable.**

Vision means being able to rise above the immediacy of the rapid growth we are experiencing, to look long term, and to hold fast to a set of principles that guide day-to-day decisions. Fundamental to a leader's vision for the future is their belief in the role government

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### Mission Statement

“To inform and empower citizens in cooperative community development that respects and encourages stewardship of the Flathead Valley’s natural beauty and resources.”

### Our Principles

**Stewardship** - It is our responsibility together to care for the land, air, water, and character of the Flathead Valley for ourselves and future generations.

**Open Government** - Fair and ethical decision making requires respect for process, transparency, inclusiveness, and well-informed participants.

**Community** - We must find ways to balance and bridge our differences in order to maintain the unique quality of life in the Flathead Valley.

**Citizenship** - It is our right and our responsibility to become informed and to participate in the decisions that affect our lives and our community.

### Staff

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# Thanks for the Encouragement!

By Mary Critchlow and Jordan Tesar

A big thank you to all of you who participated in our survey this summer and took the time to answer our questions. We know there were many questions, but your input is very valuable to us. We will be working early this winter on a new strategic plan to guide our work over the next few years and this input will be very useful in that process.

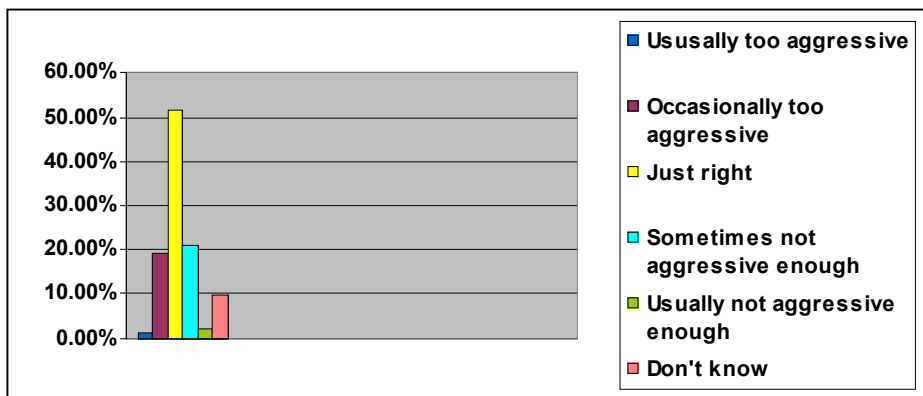
We appreciate that so many of you felt that one thing that makes CBF different from other conservation and environmental organizations is that we focus on local issues. Since 1992, Citizens for a Better Flathead has been a leader at the forefront of addressing the challenges that rapid growth is bringing to our region. We work to inform you and encourage public participation in planning for the future of the Flathead.

We asked you to rank current issues that we are working on, including long-range planning, calling for accountability, protecting water quality, improving transportation issues, advocating for smart growth, supporting neighborhood planning, working for cooperative city/council planning, and promoting waste reduction and recycling. You told us that you feel these issues are all still of great importance, since the overwhelming responses were 4 and 5s (5 meaning *very important*).

Many of you also noted and recognized that with this scope of work our “plate is full.” The annual reality is that to continue this work we need your renewed support in the form of membership renewals, generous gifts and volunteer support. Together we can do great things! Throughout this issue you will find encouragement to renew your membership and to encourage a friend to join. Clip the donation form and make a gift today! So much is possible when we pull together, so give generously.

A good number of you urged us to monitor some additional issues of growing concern to you. Noise and the need for noise ordinances was a significant new issue raised and one we have looked at in only a limited way to date. Air quality and continued loss of wildlife habitat were two others that a number of you identified as needing more attention.

For the question, “In carrying out our work, do you think CBF has been...” the majority of you (51.4%) felt that CBF has been *just right*. But almost equally on either side, 19% and 21% respectively, felt that we were *occasionally too aggressive* or *sometimes not aggressive enough*.



The five most common words we saw when asked what 3 words you would use to describe CBF’s “personality” as an organization were *informed, active/pro-active, persistent, tenacious, and fair*.

The majority of you feel that the best way to communicate with you is by email. Our online

action alerts got rave reviews and were praised as one of our most valued member services. That’s good news for us as this is the most timely and cost effective way for us to communicate with you as well. If are not getting our email alerts and you would like to, drop us an email at [citizens@flatheadcitizens.org](mailto:citizens@flatheadcitizens.org) and we will put you on our email list. Don’t worry; we will still be mailing out our newsletter. Your feedback indicates that there is something nice about still getting some information in hard copy and a majority of you find time to read it!

Almost half of you, 45.2%, told us that you prefer to write, but not speak at public hearings. Time was a big factor here. Still we can’t stress how significant it is to have the public pack a hearing room; so we’ll keep asking you to show up as often as possible. Also, keep those written comments coming as they are very important. Encourage your friends to join you in writing on issues of concern by forwarding notices of opportunities to comment. Always feel free to call us if we can direct you to additional information or answer questions.

Finally, we realize that you are all hardworking, busy individuals and most of you don’t have time to volunteer for CBF. Still, almost a third of you indicated that you would have time to volunteer occasionally. That’s music to our ears and you will no doubt hear from us during the year. There are many ways that we can put your volunteer skills to work. Think about volunteering even once a month for half a day or helping with research from the comfort of your own home. If you do have time, we would love to hear from you!

On behalf of the CBF board and staff, thanks again for taking the time to guide Citizens for a Better Flathead’s future. You can count on us to be a watchdog on the issues you care about.

## Special Forever! continued from page 1

should play in long-term planning. The position of candidates in the current race for Flathead County Commissioner illustrate this point. In a letter to CBF, candidate Jim Dupont states, “I view government as the “last resort” in dealing with problems and strive to have our citizens come to resolution among themselves rather than government regulation.” Candidate Steve Quenell on his website’s home page states, “A quality future for Flathead Valley families is too important for six more years of a County Commission that only reacts and doesn’t adequately plan for our future.” What will it take to keep the Flathead special for future generations; less government oversight or more government oversight?

Many communities are choosing to answer this question by putting in place “Benchmark Programs” to measure the ability of local governments to fulfill growth policy goals. The King County (Washington) Benchmark Program<sup>1</sup> is an example of one way communities across the country are holding their leaders and themselves accountable. These Benchmark programs bring communities together around comprehensive and measurable shared goals. A “report card” on progress is released every few years. The intention of both the policy and the implementation is to create real, long-term improvement in the quality of life in individual cities and counties. Tracking these indicators lets policy-makers know if that improvement is happening and encourages taxpayers and local government officials to work together to achieve a common vision.

### Challenge #3 Predictability—Fair and Equal.

It took the Flathead County Commissioners

ignoring literally thousands of public comments and the issues they raised regarding the proposed Glacier Mall, and a Montana Supreme Court ruling holding the commissioners’ decision-making process as illegal, to begin to bring about some important adjustments to how land use changes and public comment were handled in Flathead County. In fact, this ruling strengthened and reinforced the public’s right to be heard and have their concerns meaningfully considered across the state. Because of this ruling, Flathead County now adopts “findings of fact” for each land use decision they propose and make. This allows

the public to review these proposed findings and make comments or even hire experts to challenge questionable findings. Decisions based on a factual record create consistency and greater predictability for both the public and the development community. Government—having the final decision—also has the responsibility to ensure that these facts are adequate and sound.

Several recent court rulings have shown the importance of fact-checking. In the recent court ruling against Flathead County over approval of the Haskill Mountain subdivision in Kila, neighbors had to sue to ensure the facts were accurate. The court sided with the neighbors and found that while the developer had lined up “experts” to defend this development proposal, there were numerous inaccurate facts. The court overturned the county’s approval on the subdivision. Our current land use decision process relies on a system of experts, hired by developers, to defend development proposals without independent review of their findings and needs to be improved to provide better accountability. Leaders who aren’t willing to strongly defend a fair, factual,

and equal public process invite decisions that lack public understanding and support and increase the likelihood that decisions will be challenged. The principle of fair and equal should run through many other levels of local government including appointments to committees and boards, and willingness to work with all interested and affected parties, as well as across artificial boundaries like city/county or political parties.

### Challenge # 4 Property Rights—Look at the Big Picture.

Answering the question of where should we grow is no little challenge. This is particularly true in a county that remains largely unzoned and that has a growth policy that provides a broad vision, but has yet to put in place significant tools or standards to direct growth. The overall goal must be to protect the things that belong to all of us: clean water, natural beauty, wildlife habitat and rural, friendly communities. In the Flathead today, 80% of County residents own less than five acres, and 62% own one acre or less. The so-called property right to “do whatever one wants with their property” is almost irrelevant when one owns less than an acre of land. Instead, the leadership challenge is to work together with small and large landowners for land use policies that will better guide and shape future growth, to honor a vision of leaving an enduring legacy for future generations. Innovative land use tools, and the data we need to answer important questions about growth options, are at the fingertips of our elected officials if they choose to use them. It is now up to each of us to choose leaders who are committed to using these tools and this information to keep the Flathead **Special Forever!** We have only one chance to do this right, and that chance is fleeting.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.metrokc.gov/budget/benchmrk/bench08/index.htm>



## Christmas List ...

*The snow has not yet begun to fly, but it is coming. Please include Citizens for a Better Flathead on your shopping list this season. Our new stainless steel water bottles will make great gifts this season. Give a gift that will be used repeatedly and that invites your friends to “Drink Local and Live Green!” Just before Thanksgiving, we will have in a new stock of T-shirts to choose from as well. There will be a new shirt displaying a new local artist’s work, as well as our still popular shirt with the colorful artwork of Marshall Noice. Don’t forget to include us on your gift list this season and consider a gift-membership to Citizens for a Better Flathead for friends who share our passion of keeping the Flathead **Special Forever!***



# Bond Aims to Help Protect Clean Water, Access and Family Farms Vote November 4th

## Flathead Land & Water Conservation Bond

By Ken Siderius, Chairman - Committee for Clean Water and Open Land

On Election Day, 2008, the people of Flathead County will be asked to endorse one of the most exciting conservation measures in decades: A \$10 million bond to protect our clean water, access to the outdoors and family farms and timberland.

Please join us in supporting this bond, a locally driven solution to balance our rapid growth with the things that make Flathead County the best place on Earth to live, work and raise a family.

In Flathead County, we enjoy a unique way of life. That way of life is supported by our world-class natural resources, including our rivers, lakes, wildlife habitat, and the freedom to enjoy them by hunting, fishing, hiking and horseback riding. Family farms and timberlands help make up our spectacular setting. These are some of the things that hold us to this special place.

These natural features are also important to our economy and family-wage jobs. People visit and invest in Flathead County because they are drawn to the same natural beauty and sense of freedom we hold so dear. Economists and business people agree that our natural setting is the “golden goose” of our economy.

The fact is, Flathead County is “discovered.” We are one of the fastest growing counties in Montana and include three of the fastest growing cities in Montana. We have all watched as that growth has changed the Flathead Valley in recent decades.

Our challenge — and our responsibility — is to grow in a way that protects our clean water, our freedom to enjoy the outdoors and traditional land uses. We all want to embrace growth without discarding the very things that make the Flathead special.

The Land & Water Conservation Bond is a powerful tool to help us achieve that goal. It is a locally driven measure, which allows us to invest in our own valley. Local community leaders, business owners, sportsmen and

conservationists support the bond as a way to help direct our own future.

Based on current market conditions, the bond would cost an owner of a \$200,000 home about \$18 a year — about the cost of a cup of coffee a month. But the payoff for such an investment stands to be extraordinary.

Using tools such as voluntary conservation agreements, the money could go to protect lands that protecting clean water, such as wetlands and streamsides. Money would also help conserve and even enhance access to recreational lands, lakes and rivers and trails.

This tool is proven, right here in Montana. Other fast-growing Montana counties such as Gallatin, Missoula and Ravalli have passed similar bonds. In Gallatin County, the initial measure was so popular that a second, \$10-million bond passed by 70 percent! These communities have also been able

to match local investment with private and federal funds — multiplying their initial investment.

Of course, we are all concerned how public money is spent. That’s why transparency and accountability is built in to this process. The measure directs the county commission to form a steering committee to oversee and assess conservation proposals. There are also provisions requiring independent, public audits. Final authority on the spending rests with the county commission.

This is not just about us. It is about our kids and our grandkids. We need to ask ourselves, what kind of future are we leaving the next generation? Will people in the future enjoy the freedom, prosperity and natural beauty we all love? You can help answer that question by voting “yes” on the Flathead County Land & Water Conservation Bond on Nov. 4.

For more details, contact the Committee for Clean Water and Open Land at 752-8293 or 270-0603.



### Flathead County 9-1-1 Dispatch and Emergency Coordination Center Ballot

There will be a second bond issue on the ballot November 4th. As of press time we had not received a requested story about this ballot issue. You can, however, visit a web site to learn more about this second bond at <http://www.flathead911center.com/index.htm>

If passed the Flathead County 9-1-1 Dispatch and Emergency Coordination Center bond would support the construction of an Emergency Services Center to improve emergency response times throughout the Cities and the County.

## Don't Miss This Great Opportunity to Speak up for Clean Water! Help keep the Flathead *Special Forever!*

Putting in place streamside setbacks along our rivers and streams is the most important next step Flathead County can take to protect and enhance water quality according to local scientist, water quality specialist, US Fish and Wildlife, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and the Flathead Basin Commission. The Flathead County Planning Board has listen to diverse testimony on this issue and is also supporting reasonable setbacks from rivers and stream when new subdivisions are proposed. Unfortunately, there is still vocal opposition from a segment of the development community. This means that strong public support at coming hearings will be essential. The county commissioners will not consider any of the prior testimony on these setbacks, so if you commented at prior hearings you must do so again.

### WHY FLATHEAD COUNTY NEEDS TO ADOPT STREAMSIDE SETBACKS:

**1. Flathead Valley's water is some of the cleanest in the world, and it's our duty to protect that clean water as we grow and develop.** Besides having remarkably clean water, Flathead County is one of the fastest growing communities in Montana. We need to grow in a way that protects our water.

**2. Clean water is important for both our way of life and our economy.** Our quality of life is our "golden goose" that attracts investors and keeps this valley prosperous. Our rivers and lakes are known all over the world for their beauty and clarity.

**3. Streamside setbacks help to protect the public health and safety and private property from flooding.** We have a responsibility to plan ahead.

**4. Larger setbacks are needed along larger rivers because those rivers have the greatest potential to migrate significantly.** It's only common sense. Some of the larger rivers, such as the Flathead, Stillwater, and Whitefish rivers will move significantly over the next 100 years. Thus, it is important that the County ensure adequate setbacks are required along these rivers not only to protect water quality but also to protect private property.

**5. When flooding occurs that damages private property, taxpayers can be held liable.** For example in 1992, Missoula County approved a 92-lot subdivision along lower Grant Creek which later flooded. As a result of this flood, homeowners filed a lawsuit against the property developer, the developer's engineer, local real estate agents, and Missoula County. A negotiated settlement paid \$2.3 million to the plaintiffs.<sup>1</sup>

**6. Protect important wildlife habitat and areas for outdoor recreation – riparian areas provide the most productive wildlife habitat in the state.** Rivers and streams are critical for spawning trout. Our rivers and streams support countless hours of outdoor recreation, which is why Flathead Valley hunting and fishing groups support generous setbacks.

### STREAMSIDE SETBACKS: A FAIR AND EFFECTIVE TOOL TO PROTECT CLEAN WATER

**1. Clean water and healthy streams belong to all of us.** Private property rights are important but no individual or company has the right to spoil our water or harm our streams.

**2. Setbacks are being used effectively across the country and in many Montana counties as a simple cost-effective tool to protect water quality.** Nine Montana counties – Choteau, Powell, Missoula, Gallatin, Lewis and Clark, Madison, Meagher, and Park County – have adopted streamside setbacks to protect water quality in streams and rivers. For example, streamside setbacks in Lewis

and Clark and Gallatin County are very similar to what is being proposed for Flathead County. Setbacks of 150 feet along the Big Hole River were adopted through a joint effort among the 4 Montana counties that the Big Hole River travels through; Madison County has had a 500 foot setback in place along the Madison River since 1993.

**3. The setback regulations currently being proposed provide flexibility** through the Riparian Resource Management Plan for developers that feel their property can achieve water quality objectives through mitigation with a lesser setback. This is in addition to the Reasonable Use Exemption (RUE) that would allow you to build on your property if the setback rendered it unbuildable.

**4. It is important to note that the proposed County streamside setbacks only apply when land is subdivided for residential, commercial or industrial uses.** They don't apply to existing lots. So unless, for example, a farmer decides to quit farming and subdivide his or her land for residential development, they will in no way be affected by the proposed streamside setbacks.

**5. Streamside setbacks maintain if not enhance property values, which is why so many developers already use them.** The recent 300 unit Silverbrook subdivision, near Church Drive north of Kalispell, requires setbacks ranging from 200 to 400 feet along the Stillwater River; the Ashley Lake South subdivision requires setbacks of 150 feet from Ashley and Bernard Creeks; and the Haskill's Pass subdivision near Marion requires 150 feet from Herring Creek; the Riverdale neighborhood plan calls for a 100 foot setback from the floodplain boundary of the Stillwater River; Siderius Commons, south

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### Mark Your Calendar Two Days to Speak Up for Clean Water

- Two Public Hearings; Attend One or Both!!  
October 23rd or October 30th beginning at 6 PM  
Flathead Valley Community College, Arts & Tech. Bldg.
- Speaking at the Hearing is very important!
- Comments can be emailed to [msevier@flathead.mt.gov](mailto:msevier@flathead.mt.gov)
- Visit the website below to read the proposed regulations.
- Note that these hearings provide an opportunity to comment on a number of other proposed changes to the County Subdivision Regulations.
- To see all proposed changes visit these two website links below:  
**Stream Riparian Protection Requirements (see pages 4-43-4-48)**  
[http://flathead.mt.gov/downloads/documents/document\\_287\\_1221857469.pdf](http://flathead.mt.gov/downloads/documents/document_287_1221857469.pdf)  
[http://flathead.mt.gov/downloads/documents/document\\_288\\_1221857505.pdf](http://flathead.mt.gov/downloads/documents/document_288_1221857505.pdf)
- Visit our website for more information and our new comments coming soon.  
[www.flatheadcitizens.org](http://www.flatheadcitizens.org)

## How Much Plastic is in Your Diet?

By Jordan Tesar

Plastics, when exposed to high temperatures begin to break down. Every time you microwave food in a plastic container, leave your plastic water bottle out in the sun, or even run plastic dishes through your dishwasher, the plastic is microscopically breaking down. This means that if our food or water comes into contact with this heated plastic, we may be ingesting the plastic as well, according to new research on the safety of plastics. It's research worth watching.

Another reason to reconsider plastic is the recent concern over BPA (Bisphenol-A) that is in most hard plastics (called polycarbonates), including hard water bottles and baby bottles. BPA is a chemical that can leach out of the polycarbonates and into your food and beverage. It also appears to have the same properties as estrogen and can therefore interfere with hormone levels. While there still is debate among some about whether or not BPA is dangerous, several retailers have stopped using BPA in their plastics.

Here's an amazing fact: In 2006, the United States used 17 million barrels of oil...to produce plastic bottles. That equates to enough energy to fuel more than one million cars for a year. Add to the fact that more than 8 out of every 10 plastic bottles ends up in the landfill and it takes 700 years before a plastic



Now this guy recycles!

bottle even begins to decompose and we have a serious problem. Every single piece of plastic that has ever been made, unless incinerated, still exists today.

The plastic bottle may be the most inefficient and wasteful modern day invention, yet in 2007 we spent 16 million dollars on bottled water. That's more than we spent on iPods or movie tickets<sup>1</sup>.

Since only #1 and #2 plastics are collected to be recycled here, try to avoid any other plastic (that means 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) whenever possible. Especially try to avoid #7 plastics, which may contain BPA, unless it specifically says that it is BPA-free. Biodegradable plastics (made from plant-based materials) are starting to surface, including here in the Flathead. You'll find them at a number of restaurants for take-out use and at grocery stores where you can purchase picnic supplies made from sources such as corn or sugar cane. And finally, consider options that avoid plastics altogether. Switch to reusable, non-plastic bottles and containers. For example, Citizens for a Better Flathead now carries stainless-steel, water bottles. Purchase one to support our work, your health, and the environment!

<sup>1</sup> <http://earth911.org/recycling/plastic-bottle-recycling/plastic-bottle-recycling-facts/>



The 3rd R—Recycling—just got easier at Kalispell's two High Schools and Junior High! Thanks to collaboration between Flathead County Solid Waste District, the WasteNot Project, the City of Kalispell, and Valley Recycling each of these schools now has a large blue recycling bin for school and public use located in their parking lots. Locating recycling bins at these schools (rather than at stores in the community) removes the barrier most schools face of how to transport recyclables they are eager to collect. At each of these schools now, clubs like the Glacier High School Recycling Club (pictured at left) are providing the leadership to ensure that their schools are becoming recycling stars in the Flathead. The WasteNot Project hopes to encourage the location of recycling bins at other schools, as funding makes this possible. Pictured here from left to right are Kayla Abell, Mallare Venturin, Micah Hergesheimer, Arielle Bishop, Lindsey Shaver, Brianna Walling, Braindi Parmellee, Taylor Hart, Dexter Orr, and Michelle Shuman.

# Citizens' Annual Candidate Survey

Citizens for a Better Flathead invited the two candidates running for County Commissioner and all local legislative candidates to answer the questions listed below. Responses for County Commissioner candidates were limited to 1000 words and legislative candidates were limited to 700 words. All candidates were advised that the answers they submitted would be printed verbatim with no corrections or edits—an offer that generously allows candidates to stake their position on issues in an open-end narrative format where they can clarify key positions.

Unfortunately, not all candidates chose to respond. County Commissioner candidate, Jim Dupont declined to answer the questions we posed and instead sent a one-page letter he asked us to print. We declined to do this as it violates the question and answer format that we require all candidates to comply with.

We are sending out a Get Out the Vote email that provides information

on registering to vote and online links to each candidate's website (for those who have websites) and email contact information. We encourage you to compare the candidate's positions on issues and be an informed voter. In this email you will find links to the two letters, one from the primary and one just recently, that Mr. Dupont sent to us and asked us to provide to our readers. In fairness to both candidates, in this same email, we have provided the link to the questions that County Commissioner Steve Quenell answered in our primary edition.

As a non-profit, Citizens for a Better Flathead cannot endorse candidates for any office. We simply make this candidate forum available to all candidates to inform voters. The democratic process, however, suffers when candidates choose not to engage in spirited and respectful debate of issues central to the office they seek.

## Questions for County Commissioner Candidates

1. **Rapid Growth** — Is it the role of county government to set standards and provide incentives to encourage where growth does and does not occur?
2. **Economy** — What relationship, do you believe, exists in the Flathead between the health of our economy and the environment?
3. **Leadership Legacy** — What issues will you seek to address that you see are critical to keeping the Flathead Special Forever! and leaving a legacy for future generations?
4. **Taxes and the Cost of Growth** — As the county has grown rapidly over the past decade, its ability to maintain and afford the level of services it once provided has declined. Do you believe that this is a sign that new growth is not paying its way? What will you do to address declining services in the county? What are your priorities?
5. **Affordable Housing** — What role should the county play in addressing the growing need for affordable housing?
6. **Public Access To Public Lands And Waters** — In your opinion, are public property rights important - often as important as private property rights? What leadership will you provide on this issue in the area of public access?
7. **City-County Planning** — What priority/importance will you give to improving city-county joint planning? Would you support, and work for, establishing a way for residents in joint planning areas to be able to vote or have elected representatives on planning issues affecting them?

## Questions for Legislative Candidates

1. **Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax** — Legislation to allow city or county adoption of a voter approved, local option tax is being worked on for introduction in the 2009 legislative session. A local option tax is designed to capture tax income from the millions of visitors who come to visit and enjoy our communities each year, to provide some property tax relief, and money for infrastructure projects in the jurisdiction where the tax is collected. Will you support legislation for a Local Option Sales Tax? Why or why not?
2. **Rapid Growth** — What new land use legislation do you think is needed and what will you be promoting to address the rapid growth our county is experiencing?
3. **Public Access To Public Lands And Waters** — In your opinion, are public property rights important - often as important as private property rights? What leadership will you provide on this issue in the area of public access?
4. **Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads** — What role do you see for the legislature on these issues that you would support?



# Answers from County Commissioner Candidates



## Steve Quenell (D)

### 1. Rapid Growth —

Absolutely. The problems that we have here in the Flathead are all related to growth – and especially the explosive growth of the last 10-15 years. Degrading water quality, road dust from inadequate road infrastructure, gravel pits and outdoor shooting ranges in neighborhoods, septic sludge dumped on lands near homes, all of these must be addressed through appropriate planning measures. We must find ways

to steer growth into areas that have proper infrastructure and away from areas that have sensitive water quality and wildlife concerns.

### 2. Economy —

Our environment and our economy are inextricably linked. The Flathead Economic Development Authority has been studying our economy for several years and they continue to find that our clean water, open space, rural character, and working landscapes are the goose that lays the golden egg. People come to the Flathead to experience these qualities – whether as a visitor or to live here – and as a county we must pay special attention to just how linked our unique characteristics are to a healthy economy.

### 3. Leadership Legacy —

The biggest piece of keeping the Flathead special revolves around how we grow over the next 6-10 years. We cannot continue to grow as rapidly as we have with the same rules we have right now. We must update our rules so that we steer new development away from sensitive areas and into areas with the right infrastructure. We also need to find a way to ensure that our working landscapes remain in production to the greatest extent possible. We simply must provide options for both large and small landowners who see development as the only way to profit from their land. Our children deserve to inherit a legacy that is at least as good as the one left to us and we can only get there by starting to think more carefully in the long term.

### 4. Taxes and the Cost of Growth —

It is clear that new growth is not paying its own way – that's why taxes continue to rise while services decline. It is doubtful that growth will ever cover its own costs, however the current situation is well out of balance and must be fixed. Impact fees are one way to address this issue and it's past time for the county to implement a system that shifts some of new growth's tax burden away from property owners and towards those that benefit the most from new development. The answer to the other issue about declining services revolves around appropriate planning. Services get stretched and become more difficult – and more costly – to administer as we continue to grow haphazardly. We must implement proper planning tools that will allow us to grow in an organized and appropriate fashion so that tax increases correspond with service increases rather than tax increases and service decreases.

### 5. Affordable Housing —

There are areas in the county where affordable housing makes sense and other areas where it doesn't. The county must pay attention to places that have the appropriate infrastructure to support affordable housing and work towards making owning a home a reality for many county residents. The county should also be working closely with the cities to ensure that development around the cities doesn't interfere with the cities' ability to meet affordable housing needs. It also seems to me that the county needs its own housing authority than will coordinate with the cities and work closely with the neighborhood planning groups to provide incentives for creating new affordable housing units.

### 6. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —

We simply must strike a balance between public and private rights. The system we have now is out of balance. It favors the largest landowners over what is best for the average property owner – meaning that the pace of development has led to large, new (and often exclusive) developments paid for in part by the average county taxpayer. We have to pay attention to the fact that just over 50% of county residents live on less than 1/2 acre and just over 80% live on less than 5 acres. I'm also sensitive to the idea that most people want the freedom to do what they want on their land without a lot of regulation. Because of the rapid and haphazard growth of recent years, this is becoming increasingly problematic and we simply must update the rules of the game so that we can have freedoms while protecting our neighbors and neighborhoods.

On property rights, I will provide leadership that carefully evaluates each new development proposal for its merits and its impact on the surroundings in both the short and long term. The focus must always be what is in the best interest of the county, not just what is in the best interests of the individual. In terms of access, I will strongly defend county easements that provide traditional access to water and open space. Easements were established for a reason and provide residents access to the things that make the Flathead a special place. We simply cannot allow development to degrade or eliminate our access to our traditional recreation areas.

### 7. City-County Planning —

An improved relationship between the cities and the county is a high-level priority, primarily because our cities top the list as the fastest growing in Montana. In order for growth to proceed in an organized and appropriate way, the commissioners absolutely must cooperate and forge working relationships with the cities. The decisions that have been made to end joint planning and shared oversight have been misguided. At the same time, we must respect people's rights to vote for their representatives. It seems to me that the best plan is to let the joint planning boards do their work and then let their elected representatives make a final decision. That was good enough for 40 years in this valley and I don't see why it was changed in the first place – it certainly wasn't the cities that initiated the change. Finally, I recognize the necessity of leadership at the top level that reflects and respects the values of the neighborhoods where growth and development are occurring, whether within a city or out in the county.

# Answers from County Commissioner Candidates

## Jim Dupont (R)

Candidate did not respond in the format we requested.

## Answers from State Senate Candidates



### Brittany MacLean (D) State Senate District 2

#### 1. Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax —

Whitefish has already implemented a local resort tax. At this point, additional taxes are unnecessary. We are living in a time of economic uncertainty, and I hear every day at the doors that the people of Senate District 2 are concerned about making ends meet and absorbing the rising cost of gas and groceries. My top priority is making sure the Flathead remains affordable for Montana families.

Ultimately, I stand with the people of my district and believe that locally, we know what is best for our region.

#### 2. Rapid Growth —

We live in the one of the fastest growing regions of the state. It's clear that people across Montana, and even from other states, are realizing what we knew all along – the Flathead is a treasure. We value our natural resources, our abundant outdoor opportunities and our quality of life. Above all else we must preserve this way of life by making smart decisions. To me, this means ensuring the government is open and accessible to the public. Consensus is only reached when all parties can come to the table. Flathead residents must be involved in growth and planning policy and we need to ensure that Flathead residents, property owners and businesses can come together to decide what works for us.

#### 3. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —

When I ask the voters in my district why they enjoy living here, I hear again and again that outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing are important. We have a Constitutional right to access our public lands and streams. I will uphold this right. Additionally, I will work to strengthen our current law by codifying our right to access to rivers and streams from highway bridges. Democrats attempted to pass this bill during the 2007 session, and we will work to make sure it becomes law in 2009.

#### 4. Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads —

With gravel pits, we must strike a balance between supporting local businesses and jobs and maintaining our quality of life. The people of Senate District 2 value clean air and water. We want to raise our children in a healthy and pleasant environment. There are candidates running for office in the Flathead who own or are affiliated with the gravel pit industry. I do not have a personal investment in gravel pits and will approach this issue without bias. We need to hear all sides of this issue and make sure our quality of life is protected.



### Ryan Zinke (R) State Senate District 2

#### 1. Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax —

The problem with the Local Options Sales Tax is that it has the potential to be just another added tax burden on small businesses and working families without reducing property taxes at all. There is a general mistrust, and to a large degree justified, that any additional revenue scheme will simply mean more taxes and more government spending. A Local Options Sales Tax has other

finer points that need to be addressed such as determining what products and services, if any, are going to be exempt. Many working families have a hard time paying for groceries and other basic necessities now; adding even five percent to the bill would be devastating. On the other side of the coin, many local businesses that sell big ticket items, such as cars and heavy equipment, rely heavily on "tax free" pricing and cannot compete with big volume dealers in neighboring states. Raising prices may put them out of business. The bottom line is this, if I am to support a Local Options Sales Tax, it needs to be crafted very carefully to make sure we don't have unintended consequences that make it harder on working families and small businesses. A consumption tax sounds tempting, but the devil is in the details.

#### 2. Rapid Growth —

My family has been in the valley for three generations. From my perspective, the recent rapid growth has been mixed in terms of being "good" and "bad". While everyone likes to fondly remember "the good ol' days", we tend to forget the age of pot holes and the Poma-lift experience on Big Mountain. In almost every case of "bad" growth, it has usually been the result of short-term profit taking and lack of long-term planning, good judgment, or both. Teddy Roosevelt has the vision to look out one hundred years in terms of our National Parks and public lands, we need to do the same when it comes to planning for growth. A growth plan that changes before the ink dries is really not much of a plan, it is a recipe for disaster. A growth plan must take into consideration all aspects of impact such as watershed, public access, wildlife corridors, resource development and services. Again, growth itself is neither "good" nor "bad", it is how you grow that counts. As far as for developing additional state legislation on growth, I support the state providing guidance, direction, and funding but leaving the details under local control.

## Answers from State Senate Candidates

**Zinke** continued from page 11

### 3. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —

I am a strong supporter that the public has the right to reasonable access to all public lands, rivers, and streams. Public access to rivers and streams should include all public bridge crossings and easements. Adjacent parking along those bridges, however, should be left under county control and determined by safety. In addition, I strongly disagree with the practice of “cutting off” historical access to public lands to create private sanctuaries. Public lands should have reasonable public access....period.

### 4. Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads —

Gravel pits, dusty roads, and more roads. These are products of growth. One thing is for sure, no one is happy about the status quo. The current gravel pit policy is not working for either the contractors who produce the gravel, concrete, and asphalt, or the neighbors who are faced with a changing landscape. My position is this: Simply owning a piece of property does not give one the right to do whatever you want with it. Gravel pits require a permit, a restoration bond, and a full review. That review process should take into consideration all aspects of changing the existing use of the property (typically farmland) into the proposed use (typical an open mine). I also believe that a neighbor simply disliking a gravel pit has no grievance unless his property value is affected and/or the restoration bond and review process is either inadequate, in error, or incomplete. The process must be transparent, fair, and reasonable. In regard to roads, unless a road is owned by the state, the responsibility of maintaining and improving the road is the county or city. Priority of roads repair and improvement should be on the basis of public safety and usage. Once again, it is better to plan upfront rather than to play catch-up.



**Mark Holston (D)**  
**State Senate District 3**

### 1. Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax —

I would, of course, want to study very carefully the particulars of this or any other specific proposed legislation, but, in principle, I agree with the concept of local option taxes. Finding workable solutions to many important public issues, including taxation, is often most effective and responsive to local needs when left to those who are the most directly involved. This model of taxation has proven successful in many jurisdictions that have used it. It allows great flexibility in allowing local jurisdictions to fashion the kind of tax strategy that's most beneficial for them. What is essential is that such taxation schemes be tied to an effort to lower property taxes. The larger question is one of the need to dramatically overhaul the state's taxation system, which is inherently unfair to many property owners, particularly those on fixed incomes and in rapidly growing areas.

### 2. Rapid Growth —

Addressing rapid growth issues has largely been a county prerogative in Montana and, given our political culture, will likely continue to be so. The state's role can be to work as a partner with local jurisdictions to assist them in developing better tools for growth management. Recent examples of this would be initiatives by the Flathead Basin Commission to obtain grants for studies of groundwater contamination and its relationship to suburban sprawl and aerial mapping of sensitive riparian areas. State government agencies most directly involved in growth issues should make sure that the resources they have available in the Flathead are commensurate with local needs, which are increasing due to growth. It would make sense to develop tools for growth management on a regional or state-wide basis, and I would be eager to work with other legislators to see if there is common ground for writing new legislation that would deal more effectively with growth management while respecting private property rights

### 3. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —

The right of everyone to have access to Montana's public lands and waters must not be infringed upon in any way. As a state senator, I would resist any attempt to weaken this basic right. I don't see this in terms of a private vs. public issue, but one in which the private landowners' rights can be recognized and protected while insuring that all citizens have the right to access and enjoy their state's bounty of public lands and waters.

### 4. Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads —

These growth-related issues are of enormous importance for a variety of reasons. The rapid pace of development in the Flathead requires solid physical infrastructure, and a road system that best serves public needs is a foundation of that basic infrastructure. Unpaved roads and the dust they produce are a public health, environmental and safety issue, and can generally be seen as symptom of poor planning.

Gravel and other materials are required, and their availability locally is an economic asset. However, the proliferation of the kind of large scale industrial activity that gravel mining operations represent impels us to carefully consider the ramifications of such activities. Issues include compatible land use, the effect of such activities on the property values of neighboring landowners, the potential for water and air quality degradation, and public safety. Recent incidents strongly suggest that both local and state oversight leave much to be desired and that agency resources to adequately assess the impact of such activities on the environment, specifically water quality, are inadequate. For instance, DEQ has proven to be ineffective in dealing with both the permitting process for such operations and addressing the constitutionally-protected rights of all Montanans of a clean and healthful environment. For the benefit of all parties, legislation is needed to clarify the operations of such extractive industries.

The critical question in the Senate District 3 race is: Do Flathead voters want a representative of that industry, someone with a direct and very significant self-interest at stake, to be in a position to write and attempt to pass such legislation? Or do they want someone with the more broadly-based interests of the general public in mind to be in that crucial role? I am the candidate with no direct self interest in this issue. I will give such legislation a fair and honest hearing, but I will not be a tool of special interests.

## Answers from State Senate Candidates



### **Bruce Tutvedt (R) State Senate District 3**

#### **1. Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax —**

Under current federal tax law a sales tax is not a deductible expense on your federal income tax. I do not favor expansion of the local option sales tax.

#### **2. Rapid Growth —**

The state of Montana needs a definition of private property rights. This definition must protect the owner's right to the full and beneficial use of their property,

while also not impacting the neighbor's health/safety. The growth that we are experiencing is what drives the job market in Flathead County. If growth stops many of my friends and neighbors will not have jobs.

#### **3. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —**

We must work together to find ways for the public to access our public lands and waters. This is a very important issue to me. We need to find ways to insure this vital access does not impact any individual's private property rights. The public has property rights on public lands. There is no such thing as public property rights on private property. Private property can be condemned for public use if the proper laws are followed and there is an appropriate use.

#### **4. Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads —**

Gravel is a needed basic resource for roads, homes and commercial building. The legislature must provide leadership on the permitting process for gravel operations to follow. This process must be predictable, timely and protect neighbor's health and safety. Many of the roads in Flathead County were paved with timber dollars from our federal lands. We must work to get the timber lands of Flathead County back working for us in a healthy sustainable way.

## Answers from State House Candidates



### **Mick Holm (D) State House District 2**

#### **1. Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax —**

If citizens believe a local option sales tax is in the best interest of their community then they should have the authority to make the decision on implementation. Therefore, I would support legislation to give them that choice. I believe decisions on local governance need to be made at the local level. Any legislation must be clear that

all citizens must have the opportunity to voice their concern and cast their ballot on such initiatives through the democratic process.

#### **2. Rapid Growth —**

I am listening to the good people of House District 3 to find out what their ideas are on the needs for our county and state in the future. Door-to-door personal conversations tell me that people know what the challenges are, and they have good ideas for solutions that need to be listened to. With the rapid growth we are experiencing, it is imperative that citizens and elected officials come together and agree on a vision for what our community should, and can be. The strongest messages I am hearing are: There must be a clearly defined planning process in place with enforceable outcomes. Decisions should rest with our county commissioners following citizen input. Elected officials and decision makers must recognize and appreciate the value that citizens place on good jobs, a clean and healthful environment, a quality educational system, access to our public lands, and a strong and vibrant local economy.

#### **3. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —**

We must not short change our citizens in their right to access our public lands. If people are shut out of their public lands, there becomes an erosion of public support. Without public support, society loses sight of the value of public lands. With loss of a sense of value there becomes a loss of need. We can not afford to let that happen. Private property rights are as important to Montana's private land owners as public property rights are to all Montanans. One can not outweigh the other, they must exist harmoniously. I believe Montana was built on citizens working hard to be good land stewards and good neighbors. We are blessed to live in an area that has millions of acres for each of us to enjoy, and we must be guaranteed access to those lands.

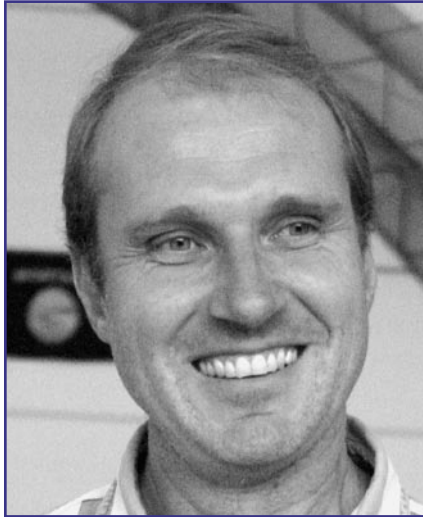
#### **4. Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads —**

It is my opinion that decisions on these issues need to be at the local level. I am confident that by coming together involved citizens and our elected county commissioners can find solutions to local issues. State involvement becomes essential when there is infringement on all citizens' constitutional guarantee to a clean and healthful environment. The state has the resources for monitoring impacts so they must be part of the overall process. I would not support legislated mandates to counties or communities without sharing the fiscal responsibility for their implementation. Keeping discussions and decisions at the lowest level of government is in everyone's best interest. The more layering of bureaucracy you have, the less citizens become directly involved in the final decision or rule making.

## Answers from State House Candidates

### Dee Brown (R) State House District 3

Candidate chose not to respond.



### Mike Jopek (D) State House District 4

#### 1. Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax —

Whitefish resident overwhelmingly renewed the local tourist tax to help pay for roads, parks and lower property taxes. In fact, Whitefish will rebate some \$433,000 of the tourist tax back to property tax payers this year. The towns of Whitefish roads are in good shape and our local parks and bikeways expanding, thanks in much part to a healthy tourism climate and the smarts

of local business leaders.

Montana is clearly on the right road. We lead the Nation in conventional and alternative energy production. Our economy is growing amongst the fastest in the Nation; our State budget has enormous surpluses, and we create jobs at record paces. We've invested more dollars into local and higher education than anytime in our history, thanks to our oil and gas boom. All of this is a sign of good fiscal discipline and the innovation of our business leaders.

Whitefish locals are the kindest folks anywhere in Montana, our schools the greatest, and our business leaders the smartest. We are blessed as a community to care for others. Our family bonds remain strong.

We must continue to work collaboratively. I am committed to growing our economy and keeping Montana on track.

#### 2. Rapid Growth —

The Whitefish area has been the fastest growing town in Montana for a long time. Good growth brings good jobs and opportunity. In 2005 Montana allowed local communities have developers pay their own way on infrastructure needs, taking the burden from old time residents. In 2007 we enabled parkland dedications for minor subdivisions.

As old time Whitefish area residents can attest, there is a direct relationship between fast growth and taxes. The 2009 Session will seek to lower property taxes as a result of fast paced growth. I serve on tax committees and will put Montanans first.

The 2007 Legislative Session taught us all a lot. Many blame the conflicts on the system, but simply there were too many hotheaded folks in the majority of the House. Politics should rather reflect our local community. And the Whitefish area is a good, safe, and kind place; you make it so.

#### 3. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —

The waterways and public lands belong to the people of Montana. In 2007, I sponsored HJ57, which ratifies the ability of the State Land Board to conserve our Public Lands. This goes along way in protecting areas like

Spencer Mountain, Beaver Lake, Haskill Basin and the Public Lands around Happy Valley.

In both 2005 and 2007, I worked to preserve public access to streams and rivers from county bridge right of ways. Public Land is our heritage and our traditional way of life should be preserved. Access to Public Land and waterways is critical for hunters, anglers, recreators, and a driving force behind our local economy.

#### 4. Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads —

In the 2005 Montana House, I sponsored HB 591, which became Montana law and gave back the freedom for local County Commissioners to regulate gravel extraction operations in residential areas. Some counties use this tool quite well while others are sitting back idly watching.

In 2007 I sponsored a couple more bills relating to gravel pits and homes. HB 583; cleared up a lot of fuzzy language on pit expansion and allowed bonding to be returned back to operations more efficiently while protecting neighbors. It became law, but it was my bill, HB 201, which would have hired more staff at the agency. Sadly a handful of hotheaded naysayer spoiled the solution that would have avoided the current situation in Montana.

Gravel mining is a complex and spirited issue, which relates to growth, neighborhoods and livelihoods. It's apparent that we can have a great quality of life, protect our investments and encourage good paying jobs but we need cool headed leaders with courage. If you have solutions, please email me at [mike@mikejopek.com](mailto:mike@mikejopek.com) or call me at 250-1184. With a bit of grace, we will get there.

I'll keep working with our Governor and any willing Legislator or local to keep the Whitefish area and our State the kind of place where our families, kids, elderly and local businesses continue to succeed.

I am committed to growing our economy and keeping Montana on track. I am humbled by your continued faith, inspiration and trust.

### John Fuller (R) State House District 4

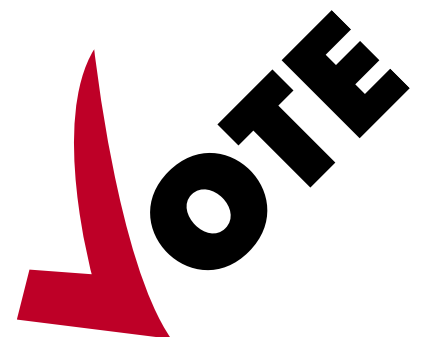
Candidate chose not to respond.

### Jake Pannell (D) State House District 5

Candidate chose not to respond.

### Keith Regier (R) State House District 5

Candidate chose not to respond.



## Answers from State House Candidates



### Scott Wheeler (D) State House District 6

#### 1. Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax —

I will support legislation allowing voter approved local option taxes to pay for infrastructure projects such as roads, road paving, water treatment facilities, etc. I have been asking voters in the West Valley would they support a local option tax to provide the money to pay for the paving of the 700 miles of unpaved roads in the valley. Most voters tell me they would support such taxes.

#### 2. Rapid Growth —

I will oppose legislation that would give large landowners a greater say in neighborhood planning than their neighbors who own less land. There were at least three bills proposed by local Republican legislators in the last session that would have made it nearly impossible for people to protect their water rights and property values from developers. All property rights must be respected, to include those of the small landowners and homeowners in the rural parts of our county. Legislation is needed to give neighborhood plans protection from the constant nibbling away by people who want to change the plans without due and fair process.

#### 3. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —

Private property rights are critical to the functioning of our society. However, there are common rights to things like clean air and water that are public rights guaranteed in the Montana Constitution. In the American legal tradition, one's private property rights do not give a person or company the right to infringe the rights of other private property owners. Our tradition also protects the "commons" or public property rights from being taken by people exercising their private property rights. We need to maintain these principles of mutual rights with systems that adjudicate disputes when they arise.

#### 4. Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads —

We need to follow the principles in paragraph 3. We also need to provide much greater resources to the Department of Environmental Quality so the DEQ can properly evaluate gravel pit requests expeditiously and so that Environmental Impact Statements can be properly developed and evaluated. I will support legislation to give DEQ the resources to do its job and require the department to protect environmental quality and neighborhood plans in the process. Gravel roads should be paid for by local option taxes and by impact fees paid by developers.

### Bill Beck (R) State House District 6

Candidate chose not to respond.

### Shannon Hanson (D) State House District 7

Candidate chose not to respond.



### Jon Sonju (R) State House District 7

#### 1. Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax —

I do not support any new taxes on the taxpayers of the State of Montana. I currently serve as the Vice Chairman of the House Taxation Committee where the Local Option Sales Tax Bills are introduced and voted on. My voting record shows that I do not support the local option sales tax. I have not supported the previous bills for a variety of reasons: Mainly is that the cities and

counties have not presented a bill that everyone can agree upon. In the past, different communities have brought competing bills to the committee that are confusing and last minute with much opposition. A large opponent has been The Montana Taxpayer Association (MONTAX).

I have included information from MONTAX. The association points out many facts about issues with regard to the resort tax in Montana.

- \* There is no common tax base- luxuries are defined differently community to community.
- \* The tax rate can be up to 2%, there is no conformity.
- \* Businesses that operate in different communities are subject to varying bases and tax rates.
- \* Reporting forms- collection points are inconsistent.
- \* If a local sales tax is allowed, there could be 56 counties and well over 120 cities all acting as tax collectors and auditors. This would be a reporting nightmare.

MONTAX also points out that the local option sales tax is just another selective sales tax on Montanans. They continue to say that Montana ranks high in the use of selective sales tax already. As a percent to income, Montana is 4th highest in the United States in selective sales tax.

As a lawmaker I will quickly point out that some of the opposition issues can be worked out and agreed upon. I would encourage our local governments across Montana to work together to bring a bill to the legislature that is not confusing and everyone can agree upon.

#### 2. Rapid Growth —

I support local control on most land issues facing our area. I would rather have our local officials make decisions for Flathead County rather than a bureaucrat from Helena.

#### 3. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —

I am a pro-property rights supporter. Property rights are important and we need to make sure that they are protected on a federal, state and local

## Answers from State House Candidates

### Sonju continued from page 13

level. I also support public lands and waters. Access to public lands starts by taking care of what the state currently owns. Many camping areas, state parks and access points need to be updated and maintained better.

#### 4. Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads —

The reality is that the road systems in Montana need gravel pits. This issue is not an easy one and starts with leadership at the local level. I will continue to work with our local officials to give them as much support as I can from Helena.

The State needs to be more proactive in county road construction and maintenance with increased funding. If we would further develop our natural resources across Montana we could have an income stream that could go to our roads.

Instead of always talking about developing our natural resources we need to do it. The Governor, Legislators and Citizens all need to be engaged. Republicans and Democrats need to quit blaming each other for everything and just move forward to what works for Montana.



### Cheryl Steenson (D) State House District 8

#### 1. Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax —

Taxes are the most talked about aspect of government. We need them, but nobody wants to pay them. Taxes are required to pay for our security, our roads and our schools, but the ability to keep our hard earned money is also necessary. As a government, we need to strike a balance between the need to tax and the need to allow citizens to

keep the money they earn. It is a difficult task, but not impossible. With a commitment to discipline, efficiency and bipartisanship, we can reduce wasteful spending.

I have signed a fiscal responsibility pledge, vowing not to raise your taxes, including property taxes. We must have a just and equitable tax system that fosters growth.

The government must strive to relieve the burden on the middle class, not find more ways to tax families worrying about paying to fill up the car, buying milk and heating the home.

#### 2. Rapid Growth —

Without proper planning, our development becomes ad-hoc and the citizens of our community lose. We must balance the desires and rights of private property owners with the desires and rights of the community at large. At times, a consensus might not be reached, but that is why we must have specific guidelines that will be consistently applied. If all parties know the law going in, then all parties can know they were treated equally and fairly.

Planning issues are best addressed at the local level. What works in Missoula County might not be right for Flathead County. We should not give up our rights as a county to the state government.

#### 3. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —

We have the most beautiful land in the entire world right here in our backyard. We are fortunate enough to live in a place people dream of, a place people travel thousands of miles just to spend a few precious days in, a place of true majesty. It is wrong to deny ourselves the ability to access our most valuable asset – the outdoors. We must guarantee public access to our pristine environment.

Last session, my opponent voted against a bill clarifying our stream access rights. SB 78 would have guaranteed the right to access streams and rivers from bridges. The bill passed the Senate with bipartisan support, but was voted down in the house, in part by my opponent.

Public property rights are important; so are private property rights. However, the two do not have to be mutually exclusive. Private property owners can be protected, while guaranteeing access for the public. This is not an either/or issue. I support both private and public rights. We must do what is right and good for the greatest number of people.

#### 4. Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads —

Gravel pits and the issues that come with them are tricky business. The first thing we need to recognize with gravel pits is the need to operate them in an environmentally neutral way. We must protect our air and water quality and the way of life we all enjoy in the Flathead.

Gravel is needed to continue our record growth here in the Flathead. It is an essential building material, and one we are fortunate enough to have near by. Having gravel pits close to construction sites help reduce the cost of building. In these hard economic times, finding ways to reduce cost is essential.

Gravel pits also provide good paying jobs, which are needed in our county and state. We must find a way to allow gravel pits to operate because they save money and create high-paying jobs.

### Craig Witte (R) State House District 8

Candidate chose not to respond.



### Edd Blackler (D) State House District 9

#### 1. Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax —

I will support necessary legislation that will provide communities the opportunity to allow their residents to consider a local option sales tax.

#### 2. Rapid Growth —

I will support legislation that guides communities toward responsible planning that is based on sustainable

## Answers from State House Candidates

### **Blackler** continued from page 14

principals which reflect cost effective, “pay as you go,” practices.

#### 3. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —

I respect private property rights that do not jeopardize other people’s property rights and expectations. When matters of health and safety are concerned, there are public property rights that sometimes out weigh personal property rights.

I support public access to public property, and will champion legislation that keeps public property in the hands of the public.

#### 4. Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads —

Gravel pits, and roads, both paved and unpaved, are essentially the responsibility of County government, but I will support any state level legislation that may be necessary to provide effective guidelines to counties.

### **Scott Reichner (R)** **State House District 9**

Candidate chose not to respond.



### **Carla Augustad (D)** **State House District 10**

#### 1. Taxes; Local Option Sales Tax —

I do not support this. We already have a tax to capture income from the millions of visitors who come to Montana each year; it is called the Bed Tax. The bed tax creates a few good marketing jobs in Montana, but businesses are increasingly feeling the need to turn to HB-1 foreign nationals to fill their employment needs because too many local people cannot

afford to live in the area when the employment season is so short. It is time to use some of that money for more substantial than marketing the status quo.

#### 2. Rapid Growth —

I do not have any proposed solutions at hand right now. I expect that CBF and many other fine folks will step forward to provide me with all the necessary information to make the best choices possible after I am elected.

#### 3. Public Access To Public Lands And Waters —

I have pledged to keep our public goods and services public and I stand by that. Unfortunately there are some instances where public lands and water have been allowed to be surrounded by private ownership and we may need to seek redress through easements or through legislation.

#### 4. Gravel Pits, Roads, and Unpaved Roads —

It is the duty of the state to set the standards in regards to public safety, water quality and other environmental quality then to see to it that those standards are adhered to. That means fixing the DEQ so that it can function the way it is supposed to without standing in the way of progress.

### **Mark Blasdel (R)** **State House District 10**

Candidate chose not to respond.

### **Special Forever!** continued from page 5

of Kalispell, is going to require a 200 foot setback with a 75 foot vegetative buffer along Ashley Creek; the North Fork Neighborhood Plan calls for a 150 foot setback from the high water mark for rivers, lakes, and streams.

Plum Creek, the largest private landowner in the county, has voluntarily established a company policy of requiring a minimum 150 foot setback from all streams and a 150 foot setback from any wetland areas on all of its subdivisions.

6. **Streamside setbacks do not provide public access to private property.** The setback will function much like side and rear yard setbacks standards that must be followed when locating a house for building purposes; the setback area remains private property.

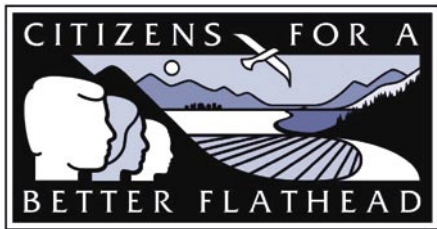
<sup>1</sup> Taken from “Protecting People, Property, and Montana’s Streams and Rivers with Specific Information on Ravalli county, Montana” by Montana Audubon.

Make the world a better place.

VOTE

Good design makes choices clear.





## *Special Forever!*

*A Campaign for the Future of this Great Place.*

**A** bold vision for the future of the Flathead Valley over a hundred years ago resulted in over 2.7 million acres of public lands being set aside to, as George Bird Grinnell wrote in the early 1900's, conserve not only the beauty of the area, but the practical considerations of water, timber, wildlife and other natural resources. Today, Flathead County's public lands represent an incredible national treasure and one of the prime engines of our local economy.

An equally bold, though somewhat different vision, is needed today for the half a million acres of private lands that lie in the center of these public lands and offer home to some 86,000 residents today. What is needed is a vision that protects our quality of life now and creates a better future for those who come after us. At Citizens for a Better Flathead, we firmly believe and work from the vision that the land-use planning tools coupled with public will and passion are within our reach to ensure that we retain the clean water, natural beauty and friendly communities that define our valley today. We believe that sound land use planning is the foundation for a durable and prosperous economy.

A hundred years forward, may it be said of those who today call the Flathead Valley their home, that they got it right, that they came together to learn how to live well and to live sustainably. Many share the vision of *Special Forever*, including leaders in the development and business communities, who wish to move forward to a more fair and predictable planning process that keeps our valley special. Join us in moving forward.



Special places demand quick action to keep them that way. The North Shore of Flathead Lake is just such a place. We recently provided the detailed research and advocacy, which helped demonstrate that this was an inappropriate place for a proposed massive subdivision along Flathead Lake's North Shore.

*Citizens for a Better Flathead: Giving Voice and Leadership to a Bold Vision*

## *Special Forever!*

*This is the Time to Make Your Investment Count!*

- ❖ **Ensure that we will be there daily**, a voice of leadership and expertise for the future of this great place, promoting best practices, providing essential research and analysis, keeping you informed.
- ❖ **Encourage sound planning** while there is still time to guide how the valley grows.
- ❖ **Honor a vision of leaving an enduring legacy for future generations.**

### **Support Citizens for a Better Flathead Today!**

Together we can ensure policies are in place to keep the Flathead *Special Forever!*

*Please send to Citizens for a Better Flathead - P.O. Box 771, Kalispell, MT 59903*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

- |                                |                       |                                   |                                  |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35  | Membership            | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500    | Smart Growth Leader              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50  | Smart Growth Advocate | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000  | Stewardship Builder              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 | Hometown Hero         | <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000  | Preserver of Place               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 | Community Builder     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 | <i>Special Forever!</i> Champion |