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## Goodbye Predictability: Hello Flexibility

County Planning Board proposes sweeping changes to growth policy

by Mayre Flowers

Every chance the planning board gets these days, it reminds the public that the county commissioners have directed them to develop a new county growth policy that provides for maximum flexibility. Changing circumstances brought on by increasing growth pressures are cited as justification for the need for flexibility. It's a kind of father-knows-best philosophy that concentrates ultimate planning power in our three county commissioners or simply opens the door by removing many long-standing planning guidelines regarding where and how new developments can take place.

The gap between flexibility and predictability, however, becomes gaping and more than alarming when one looks at the scope of changes being proposed in a draft of the new county growth policy. One sentence alone, on the next to the last page of the document, wipes out almost all existing agricultural zoning and neighborhood plans, covering thousands and thousands of acres. It does this by stating that, "No zoning district or neighborhood plan shall be created that result in minimum lot sizes greater than 5 acres or discrimi-

nates against the creation of affordable housing."

Affordable housing is defined in



"Agriculture still has a great future in the valley and county land use plans should help to secure this future," according to Duane Johnson head of the Creston Agricultural Experimental Station. The Station helps farmers get started with a growing range of profitable new value-added agricultural products such as fuel oils, lubricating oils, essential oils, snack foods and many more, "There is a future for agriculture here, it just has to evolve and change a little bit from the way we looked at it before," Johnson recently told a visiting Leadership Flathead class touring the Creston center.

the draft growth policy as "...the ability of the average wage earner in the county to enjoy property and home ownership." Any subdivision easily becomes justified under this definition. The growth policy even states that the creation of high-end subdivisions frees up less expensive housing, by creating options for residents to move into more expensive homes!

If this growth policy is adopted, gone are the neighborhood plans hammered out over kitchen tables and countless neighborhood meetings to

reflect the collective desires of homeowners for their area. Gone is the 1000-acre zoning district estab-

lished last year by farmers who wanted to preserve one of the most productive and unbroken areas of farmland in the valley. Gone is the protection of property rights that zoning provided for thousands of homeowners and businesses who relied on established zoning to make what for most people is the single largest investment of their lives—their homes or small businesses.

Gone, because another sentence in the document requires that all existing zoning districts, neighborhood plans, and subdivision regulations be made consistent with this new policy. Even

with some 70% of the county not currently covered by zoning or neighborhood plans, the county planning board has seen fit to target and wipe out these existing plans and zones, opening the entire county to lots five acres or, as it suggests, preferably smaller lot sizes.

Cluster developments are encouraged in the new growth policy, but the open space they set aside is only required to be maintained "until such time as the planning and zoning

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Citizens News is a membership publication for Citizens For A Better Flathead, a 501 C-3 non-profit organization. Citizens' mission is to

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**From Our Board...**

by Kay Lynn

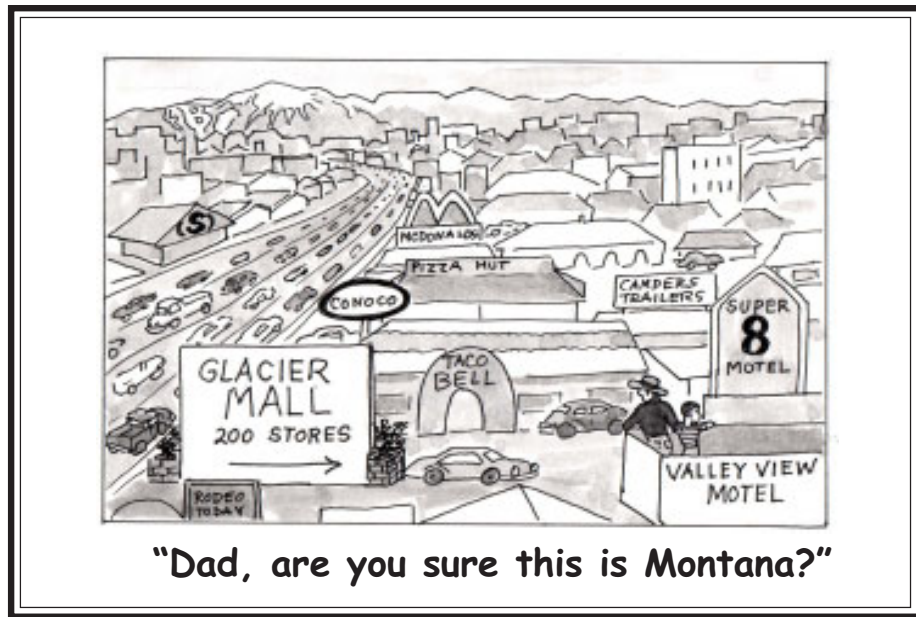


I was thinking of the "Sunday Morning" show yesterday as I drove on 93 between Kalispell and Whitefish. For decades, viewers have tuned in to this weekly television magazing which serves up soft and hard news with its culture, political, personality, and disaster coverage. From its inception, "Sunday Morning" has always ended its one and a half hours with a few moments from nature. No voice over, no music, no agenda. Just elk quietly grazing on a Montana hillside, wildflowers swaying in a Kentucky breeze or salmon maneuvering in the clear currents of a stream. This traditional ending for the program has been loved because it gave viewers time to decompress before the next onslaught of commercials and rapid-fire promotions from the network. It let us all turn our attention to nature's message of peaceful constancy and simple beauty, if just for a little while. When it was on, one could almost sense America's collective blood pressure coming down.

But through the years, the need to expand the hard news has eaten away at this already small part of the program. After all, in a time of terrorism,

turmoil, and difficulty, isn't it far more important to feed us more facts, more opinions, more words? So what began as a minute and a half clip has been nibbled down to one of thirty seconds. Now it seems as if a little bird alights on a branch and then-BANG! They are back to selling us cars. Well, viewers are complaining because it just doesn't work anymore. Thirty seconds isn't enough time for our heightened reactions and abused senses to relax enough to enjoy the balm of nature's message.

Anyway, I was thinking as I drove North on 93 that the breadth and grace of the landscape between Kalispell and Whitefish serves us just as the little nature clip from the "Sunday Morning" show served the nation...it is a little peaceful breathing space for us as we commute to jobs, run errands, hurry to pick up the kids, and rush to meetings and appointments. I think of the folks crammed into ugly city neighborhoods or dirty, smoggy, sprawling suburbs who would cry with joy to see such a sight. I see that little expanse of rolling hills and gentle farms as a free vacation that we all can take each day; that we can all share together, for a while at least.



**Cruise and Schmooze**

**Join us for a sunset cruise on Flathead Lake**

On Saturday, July 17, 2004 we are hosting a fundraising event that should be a grand ol' time, so mark your calendars! The evening will be spent aboard the Far West boat on Flathead Lake for a sunset cruise. There will be sumptuous hors d'oeuvres and a full bar. The Whitefish band "Room One" will play a snazzy mix of jazz-funk fusion music for entertainment.

Imagine taking a cruise on a warm summer eve

with good friends, good food, and good music. It's one of the most spectacular ways to view a Flathead Valley sunset. If you have yet to experience such a sight, now is the time! Tickets are \$30 for individuals, \$50 for couples. Call 756-8993 to reserve your tickets today!



**Planning Board proposes sweeping changes to growth policy, continued from page 1**

documents on the property are changed.” (Translated, that implies until the next developer comes knocking.) Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) are encouraged and allowed in any zoning district that has an agricultural or suburban agricultural designation. Under county regulations, PUDs allow the insertion of up to 50 % commercial or industrial coverage into any area where they are applied. Under this plan, Glacier Mall could now find a home in almost anyone’s backyard.

And what will pay for the services all this new development will require, including roads, sheriff, and fire? Not impact fees. The use of impact fees to pay for new growth is clearly discouraged by requiring an extensive burden of proof to justify any application.

Public lands are also targeted for county control in the new draft growth policy. The policy states, “The County Commissioners shall prepare a Natural Resource document and become a cooperative agency with respect to the management of state and federal lands which comprise over 80% of the lands in the county.” Heads-up to Whitefish as they work to shape a plan for 13,000 acres of state lands that define their quality of life and serve as an economic engine by attracting investment in their uniquely appealing community.

After two years of work by the county planning board, this draft grow policy document was finally released in April and shared with the public only after repeated requests for a preview of what they were considering. Planning boards are invested by law with the task of drafting and presenting their final recommendations to elected county or city officials (depending on the area the plan covers) for their consideration. These officials can in turn

accept, reject, or put the policy proposed by the planning board to a public vote.

The good news is the planning board is saying they want more public involvement. Additionally, the planning board has committed to host new neighborhood meetings and take public comment, when they complete their draft plan, in the same neighborhoods they visited a year ago. (They have set no deadline yet for completing their revision of the growth policy, but 2006 is the deadline set by the legislature.)

A good growth policy will only emerge from a process that engages the community in a meaningful dialogue and broad consideration of choices. If the new draft growth policy described above doesn’t match your vision of a desired future for the Flathead Valley, it’s time to get involved.

Check out two other articles on growth policies in this issue. Find out what public input has called for so far and also look at the article that

outlines components of a good public process for developing a growth policy. Then call our office and ask to have your name added to our contact list for email updates on the growth policy process. Most importantly, familiarize yourself with county commissioner candidates, one of whom will likely shape the future direction of the county growth policy.

Also, query legislative and governor candidates about their positions on providing state legislation that encourages the development of sound growth policies. The legislature plays a key role in defining the scope and detail that such plans must meet. Recent legislatures have succeeded in significantly weakening growth policy legislation. Then get out and vote June 8th and November 4th!



We’re losing our most fertile and productive land the fastest. From 1992 to 1997 in the United States, the rate of conversion of prime rural land was 30 percent faster proportionally than the rate of non-prime rural land.

**Public Comments and Draft County Growth Policy Are Worlds Apart**

by Casey Fagre and Mayre Flowers

There is a political adage that maintains, “The world is ruled by those who show up for meetings.” However, in Flathead County this adage doesn’t hold true, particularly when one compares the public comments submitted to date with the draft of the new county growth policy, released in April. Between November 2002 and March 2003, the county planning board hosted 16 neighborhood meetings

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**Building a Common Vision for Our Future: Four Essential Steps**

Is it worth getting involved in the drafting of a plan covering roughly one half-million acres of private land in the county? Absolutely! But improving the planning process might even make it fun, creative, neighborly, and enticing. An improved planning process would include:

**Choices:** Is dividing the county up into five-acre chunks a good idea? What other choices have others tried? Let’s review a variety of best practices already being tried elsewhere and consider how they might or might not fit here.

**Pictures:** What will my neighborhood, my favorite hunting area, or my workday commute look like in a county divided up into five-acre chunks? Let’s look at lots of maps, pictures, and drawings of possible scenarios. Computer technology today provides us with many options.

**Stories:** Who lives in a county divided into five-acre chunks and what do they say about it? Let’s invite a few speakers and experts to visit, host workshops, listen to their stories, and ask them tough questions.

**Facts:** Will living in a county of five-acre tracts lower taxes, keep our water cleaner, attract new business investments, and create more jobs? Let’s do the math and review professional literature on these important issues.

When we have fully explored these choices, pictures, stories, and facts, then it is time to pick out the parts we like, add our own local flavor and color, and draft a plan. The county has much to gain from adding these four elements to its planning process. Indeed, out of such comprehensive reviews can come the understanding, trust, respect, and common vision to help keep this place that each of us calls home the last best place.



## Flathead County's Hazardous Waste Collection Center Helps Keep Ground Water Clean

by Casey Fagre

Since it opened in 1997, the Flathead County Hazardous Waste Collection Center, located at the landfill, has diverted an increasing volume of hazardous materials from burial in the landfill. It also has the distinction of being the first and only permanent hazardous waste collection center in the state. However, it is estimated that the center is capturing only 27% of the 24,000 gallons of hazardous waste that are estimated to be thrown away in the landfill annually. While the portion of the landfill currently being filled with garbage has a protective liner designed to prevent groundwater contamination, liners are not fail-proof due to the possibility of getting punctured. Therefore, it is essential that businesses and households proactively keep hazardous materials out of the landfill by setting aside and properly disposing of them.

Residents are welcome to drop-off their hazardous materials, free-of-charge and by appointment, at the Hazardous Waste Collection Center on the third Saturday of each month. These materials include left over oil-based paints, pesticides, herbicides, automotive products, cleaners, and poisons. Anyone interested in using this service simply needs to call the county landfill at 758-5910.

Businesses also have the opportunity to dispose of hazardous materials at a reduced cost by participating in the second annual Small Business Hazardous Waste Collection Event to be held on June 4th at the collection center. Businesses can realize some significant cost-savings by not having to contract for individual collection services. Pre-registration is required, yet easy to do. If interested, contact the county landfill (758-5910) for more details.

## Glass Recycling Here at Last!

To drink or not to drink? That was the question. Lately, the decision of buying a bottle of beer had an outcome that would stick around for generations. Many years down the road, my great-grandchildren could discover my used glass bottles in the landfill—a time capsule, of sorts, detailing all the options of intoxication in the new millennium.

Fortunately for us, that trend will soon be coming to an end. New World Recycling has acquired a glass pulverizer and is working to have it up and running by July! This machine pulverizes all glass into two grades—a pure sand grade, and a 3/8 inch or less grade. The sand can be used as an ice-melt mix, a reflective mix in road paint, sand traps in golf courses, and even ashtray sand for cigarette butts. The 3/8 inch or less grade can be used for drainage around piping and septic systems, decorative gravel, glassphalt mix in the roads, walking paths, and a number of other uses not even conceived of yet.

Glass recycling has finally arrived in the valley and as a community we can now work together to stop throwing our glass bottles away entirely. If you're interested in recycling your glass, call New World Recycling at 863-4807 and I will instruct you how to do so. I appreciate all the support.

Cory Cullen

### Thank You, Casey!

A big thank you and farewell to our Program Assistant Casey Fagre. She will be headed to Colorado in June to polish her teaching skills as an outdoor educator. Though we can't take credit for her fabulous talents as an instructor, we can say that we gave Casey her very first teaching break at the DUMP! She will be missed!

At right, Casey Fagre, Evergreen 5th grade teacher Don Peterson, and a student examine a worm at the compost garden in the Flathead County Landfill.



### Neighborhood Potluck: Learn how to get more involved in your community

CBF invites you to join us and your friends and neighbors for a casual evening of food, friends, and conversation. This is simply an opportunity to learn about the issues you care about and something about our work as well. Mike Jopek, Chair of the Whitefish Planning Board, will be the guest speaker. He will get us started in a dialogue about planning for growth in the Whitefish area. From there the discussion will take us where you choose. How does the growth in Whitefish affect your neighborhood? How does it affect the water quality?

Bring your questions, your friends, and your favorite dish! Join us on Thursday, June 24th from 6:30 to 8:30 pm in the Bohemian Grange Hall in Whitefish. Beverages and place-settings provided. All ages are welcome. This is the first of a series of potlucks to be held throughout the valley. We look forward to meeting you. If you would like to help us organize a gathering in your neighborhood, give us a call at 756-8993.

## Vote June 8th

### Ballot Issue Allows You to Ask the Question: Is There A Better Way To Run County Government?

Every 10 years our state constitution allows voters to choose to set up a study commission comprised of local citizens who review problems and solutions to running a local government. The commission then recommends changes that are voted on by all county residents. These changes can be as simple as making county commissioner elections non-partisan, to increasing the number of commissioners, making them non-paying like city councils and hiring a professional county manager. In 1994, 33 of Montana's 56 counties and 79 of its 126 municipalities voted to set up study commissions. See our spring newsletter for the full story, available soon on our Web site.

### Now Available: On-Line Membership Renewal

Renew your membership at [www.flatheadcitizens.org](http://www.flatheadcitizens.org). Simply click on the "donate now" button on the home page and fill out the information. All online donations are secure. Renew your membership today!!!

## Voting With Your Dollar: Every Purchase Counts

by Melanie Fortino

How many times, when buying an article of clothing, do you look to see where it was made? How often, when examining an apple in the grocery store, do you check the sticker to see where it was shipped from? Or when you buy a piece of furniture, do you consider where the products originated? In a time when it's hard enough to get a well-balanced meal on the table at dinner time, hardly anyone has the time to be so introspective when purchasing an apple, an article of clothing, or a piece of furniture. However, these decisions may play a role equally important as voting in the next presidential election.

Every time you purchase anything—whether it's laundry detergent, wood for a new deck, a new raincoat, anything—you are voting with your dollar. You are stating, "Yes, I support this company and its products." You are keeping them in business.

Generally, as consumers, we don't usually buy products that we know are going to break down. With larger purchases, such as a new car, we do our research into the company and the quality of their automobiles. We look for reliability, dependability, and quality. What about when buying a new t-shirt? Cotton is cotton. Yes, there is high quality cotton, but most likely the less expensive shirt will function just as well as the higher quality shirt. The name of the game becomes bargain. As a consumer, we look for the best product for the least cost.

As one person, these purchases, or choices, may not appear to be too significant. But looked at in the big picture, consumers shape the nature of business. U.S. consumers have reached, by far, the highest consumption levels achieved by any civilization in human history.<sup>(1)</sup> The power of the dollar speaks loud in a free-market capitalist system.

Businesses are no strangers to the power of the consumer. The fact that global spending on advertising reached \$446 billion in 2002 (in 2001 dollars), is an almost nine-fold in-

crease over 1950.<sup>(2)</sup> U.S. markets account for more than half of all advertising spending. One cannot help but recognize the relationship between advertising and spending.

or so from a local farm, and the other 3,500 miles from another country. If you are someone who is concerned about energy efficiency, or sustainability, which would be the apple

not tested on animals, or made with organic cotton. Other companies donate a percentage of their profits to environmental or social causes worldwide.

While it is not always easy to spend more on a product that has a cheaper alternative, we need to take into consideration the social costs that are not usually associated with the actual cost of a product. Why spend more on free-range beef? Why not buy the clothes made in Indonesia? Why buy organic juice? Why not buy redwood lumber for our home? These are all questions we as individuals need to answer for ourselves.

Everyone's decisions will be different, and there will always be tradeoffs.

We need to remember the power to shape the global economy is ours. CEOs may make the major decisions for a company, but it is the consumer who has the ultimate say. If we choose not to buy a product because of some of their business practices, the company will have no choice but to reassess and account for the social costs. If people were to only buy products from companies who have strong social and environmental ethics, businesses would start to see that acting socially responsible is good for business.

We, as consumers, have the potential to be a strong political movement. With the choices we make with our spending, we can demand for certain standards to be met. Countless activists can protest the logging of a forest, but until the consumer nation demands that paper products be required to use recycled contents, the paper mills won't listen. One person's actions may not appear to have a strong impact, but combining all of the U.S. dollars spent in just one day creates a pretty loud voice. Spend those dollars wisely.

For more information about conscious consumerism check out the websites: [www.buygreen.com](http://www.buygreen.com) or [www.greenpages.org](http://www.greenpages.org).

1-Conscious Consumerism, Dagny Tucker, 2004  
2- Worldwatch, 2004



Think of the bumper sticker, "Think Globally, Act Locally." This serves as a reminder to impart the viewpoint of the big picture in our everyday lives. We are all politically active. If we truly start seeing the act of spending money as voting, we can bring a whole new level of consciousness into shopping. Eugen Lobel, in his book *Humanomics*, writes, "As we are the creators of our socioeconomic system, we have the ability to choose its orientation and to design our socioeconomic life as we want it to be."

If, for example, we have a choice between an apple whose sticker claims that it was shipped over from New Zealand, and say one from Washington state, depending on which one we buy, we are "voting" on a certain farming ideology. If we buy the apple from New Zealand, we are "choosing" international growers over farmers in the United States. We are supporting the oil industry since that apple had to be flown in from halfway around the world. Or, in plain terms, one apple traveled 500 miles

you would choose?

Not all of our purchases will be easy decisions. A lot of the time, we buy a certain product, knowing there is a "conscious" alternative product, but it is too expensive. This is a common comment associated with organically grown products. They tend to be more expensive than their conventionally grown counterparts. While this may be the case in some instances, at other times, such as buying produce at the local farmers market, the money is going directly to the farmer and prices are surprisingly low.

Janey Zimmer is the owner of The Hidden Loft, a shop in Whitefish that emphasizes the sustainability and social consciousness of its products. She commented, "Every small move you make in your life creates a ripple effect, the more organic products people buy, the more readily they will be available."

Though it is not always easy to decipher which companies are socially and/or environmentally conscious, some make their practices well known. From fair-trade coffee to fleece jackets made from recycled plastic, the alternatives are out there. Many companies promote their products as being made in USA,

## Candidates for Flathead County Commission

Citizens for a Better Flathead asked all candidates for Flathead County Commission the following seven questions. Five candidates responded.

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Numerous recent studies have found that our greatest economic asset is the Flathead's natural and recreational amenities. Do you agree with these findings? What can be done and what leadership is needed to help conserve this asset and attract the business investment that will create quality job growth in our county?

**2. Taxes and 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, which is a sign that new growth is not paying its way. For example, the county no longer accepts any new roads, and existing subdivision regulations do not require developers to pave any public access roads, regardless of how much traffic their project generates. A smaller ratio of sheriff officers must attempt to serve a larger number of residents, and volunteer fire departments struggle to recruit volunteer firemen. If elected, what will you do to ensure that services do not continue to decline and that they are provided

for in the most cost-effective manner?

**3. Commercial Development:** What role should tools like a county growth policy and zoning play in shaping the location and quality of commercial development in the county? Where do you think new commercial development should be encouraged to locate? To discourage developer-driven growth, many communities across the country now require the development of detailed findings of facts to support the need for significant expansions to commercial and retail development; do you see this as important?

**4. Growth Policy:** The Flathead County Planning Board is required to develop a new county growth policy by 2006 and has begun this process. A recent draft version of this plan includes a proposal to limit lot sizes to no greater than five acres throughout the county. As all zoning, neighborhood plans, and subdivision regulations must be made consistent with an adopted growth policy, this one-sentence proposal would wipe out most existing neighborhood plans and zoning currently in effect in the county and dramatically encourage more rapid subdivision of farmland. Would you support such changes to the county growth policy? What is your vision of how a growth policy should be developed to direct future growth in our county?

**5. Water Quality:** The majority of development in the county is taking place on septic systems. Recent figures from the county health department suggest that there is a growing shortage of farmland available for the spreading and tilling in of waste pumped from septic tanks. Some areas of the county have shallow, sensitive aquifers where some water quality experts argue development should be carefully limited. Water quality in our major lakes, especially Flathead Lake continues to decline annually. What steps will you take as county commissioner to secure the protection of our water quality in the future?

**6. Development on State Lands:** What is your position on the conversion of timber and agricultural lands surrounding cities to residential and commercial use, especially in regard to the DNRC Land Use Plan to develop 13,000 acres of land near Whitefish? Do you feel that the development of state-owned land should comply with local land use plans?

**7. Leadership:** Beyond the scope of the questions you have already been asked to respond to, are there any other important issues facing Flathead County that you want to comment on? Why do you feel you are best suited to be elected a Flathead County Commissioner?

### Joe Brenneman, Democrat

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** My family has made its living in the Flathead Valley from farming and timber harvest for four generations. We have taken advantage of the natural and recreational amenities when we can, now those same amenities are vital to sustain the emerging economy of the Flathead. Our present diverse and growing economy is being driven by the attractiveness of our area, from Glacier Park to Flathead Lake and all the wonders in between.



If we don't realize that and take appropriate action to sustain the integrity of what draws people to this area, our economy will suffer. It is important; however, that we make a concerted effort to maintain the traditional portions of our economy as well. Competent agricultural practices provide scenic views, wildlife habitat and assist with water quality—all vital in making the place attractive for others and for new business. I will take a very active role in attempting to develop a community approved plan to save farmland from development with incentives, not restrictions. Sustainable and sensible timber harvest coupled with overall well managed forests not only provides jobs, but can reduce the danger of wildfire to homes built in wooded areas.

**2. Taxes and Cost of Growth:** It is difficult to over emphasize the complexities and implications, both positive and negative, of growth. It is all the more confusing because the real costs are not always obvious

and can be shoved out of sight for a while. It might be that the struggle to recruit volunteer firemen reflects an alarming societal shift rather than a direct link to tax and growth issues. The real fiscal cost will come when it becomes necessary to pay individuals to join what are now volunteer county fire departments. We have been living in a state of denial. By putting off paving roads, and gradually reducing services we have been able to get by, but at some point all of this will catch up to us and then we will be in a real pickle. The main problem is that sufficient thought has not been put into what the long term financial effects will be of poorly planned development. It is like the old commercial for changing oil in your car in which the mechanic says, "you can pay me now for an oil change or pay later for a new engine." For the most part, the present leadership has decided to ignore the very real problems that poorly planned development will certainly bring. Development must pay its way, but the problem comes in deciding how it will happen. If we don't want to put the full cost on the developer, perhaps for affordable housing concerns, then other forms of revenue must be found. If the legislature would enact appropriate legislation, even a local option sales tax would be preferable to pretending that everything is OK with the present system of simplistic and short sighted non-solutions.

**3. Commercial Development:** Findings of fact can be misused, but common sense tells us we need a rational reason to do things, especially if that action can have far reaching implications for the community. It is regrettable that we have so many financial incentives for businesses to locate in the county and not the city where such development would better serve us all in the long run.

**4. Growth Policy:** The Flathead County Planning Board has not been a stellar example of balance, insight or positive innovation in the last number of years. The proposal to limit lot sizes to five acres, quite possibly the worst type of development imaginable, is typical of the lack of vision that has characterized county planning. I would not support such a proposal. A comprehensive growth policy that includes collaboration with the cities and provides for a way of directing our growth in intelligent and innovative ways will benefit us all. However, such a policy should emphasize incentives over regulation and must not be designed to stop growth but to manage it.

**5. Water Quality:** Water quality is understood by almost all of us to be vital to our community. Of course, it is our neighbor's septic system that is the problem, and not our own. This is another complex problem and requires that we first accept valid science that indicates that we have a problem. Then we can start to problem solve. If individual septic systems are polluting our water, the obvious solution is to have more homes on community sewage treatment systems, or better designed individual septic systems. I'm not an expert on the best way to go about that, but once we accept that our clean water can not be compromised we can begin to make the changes necessary. Certainly saving farmland from development will benefit us, not only as a place to till in our waste from septic tanks, but also because well managed farm land provides a purifying filter for our watershed.

**6. State Lands:** Land owned by the state of Mon-

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## Candidates for Flathead County Commission, continued...



### Joe Brenneman, continued...

tana is not only for those of us breathing today, but it is also for future Montanans. While it is possible that very limited development might be appropriate, overall the land should be managed with an eye to the future. It is doubtful that future generations will be grateful for developing lands of their heritage, but it is quite likely that our grandchildren would admire the vision necessary to preserve the vast majority of the 13,000 acres surrounding Whitefish. At the very least, the development should comply with local land use plans.

**7. Leadership:** Serving on the Cenex-Harvest States board of directors has given me the financial background necessary to deal with county budget issues, serving on the Kalispell City-County Planning Board gave me experience in land use issues, and a four generation history of farm work has given me a strong work ethic. I'll show up for work. Most importantly, I have a lifetime of living in the Flathead. I was born here, attended grade school, graduated from Flathead High School, and after receiving a degree elsewhere, returned and took classes at FVCC. I played football and basketball for Flathead High School, and played softball for many years in city league. I not only work the lands of the valley, I also hike in the mountains, fish the rivers, and cut firewood from the hills. I work on the Blacktail Ski Patrol; I fight fires and help pull people from car wrecks with the Creston Fire Department. I've raised my children here, coached basketball, served on local boards and community service organizations. I have a passion for the Flathead, and its future.

### John Hinchey, Republican

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Yes I agree that our greatest economic asset is our natural and recreational amenities. I believe we can enhance the economic vitality of our community while protecting these amenities. One way is through predictable land use planning that directs growth in a way that retains natural character and provides predictability and stability for business and quality of life for employees.



To increase jobs and wages, there are several things we must do:

a) Continue to strengthen our workforce through education. FVCC is an integral part of our community, and is vital to the training of our current and future workforce.

b) Improve transportation. Our roads are in need of repair and upgrading. With the valley growing like never before, we must address our roads before they become more dangerous. We must also continue to expand air transportation in and out of the valley.

c) Support and expand our industrial base. We must be sensitive to the concerns of the timber, tourism, technology, construction, professional and medical, communities, while working hard to bring in more professional, light industrial and technology jobs.

**2. Taxes and Cost of Growth:** This is a problem that must be addressed today. Roads in our county need

to be upgraded to meet the demands caused by our rapid growth. The county road department is currently struggling with 200 miles of unpaved gravel roads that need paving and a budget that allows for paving 3 miles a year. Growth costs money, and to the greatest extent possible, growth should be required to pay for itself. To that end I would be in favor of growth or development fees similar to sewer connection fees that the cities impose to pay for growth required of those systems. Such fees, must be fair and equitable and must only be assessed to pay for the impact of a development, and by state statute, may not be used for maintenance or other unrelated projects. Such fees can be imposed for roads impacted by development. Another source of road funds could be a gas tax, which may be needed (if the voters approve) to address some of the road upgrading in older subdivisions and collectors that has been deferred for so long. Fees may also be appropriate for other services as well, such as Sheriff's office, Fire and Schools. This matter needs a great deal of attention in the coming months.

**3. Commercial Development.** The growth policy should guide growth in a manner consistent with desires of the community. The policy should represent a plan for growth in the community and represent the desires of the community. Furthermore, it should be treated as a governing document. However, it is a living document, which should be reviewed every five years and modified as appropriate to keep it current. It should only be amended in the interim if there are unanticipated changes in the area or with the economy, and only after very careful consideration. Being on the Kalispell Planning board, I feel that we must plan for the future and zone where appropriate. I am aware that only about 15% of Flathead County land area is zoned. Where community areas request zoning, I would be interested in cooperating with them. County government should work jointly with all of the cities in the county regarding developments in joint planning areas surrounding the cities, so as to provide a smooth transition if and when annexation occurs. Such joint planning should also encourage development to connect to public utilities.

I am not aware of findings of fact required to support commercial and retail development. I don't know if we need to go that far, and would have to look into it further before commenting.

**4. Growth Policy:** The growth policy affects us all, and should therefore be developed and reviewed by the citizens of the valley. We must have countywide buy-in to such an important document. The policy should not be so restrictive so as to limit lot sizes to no greater than five acres throughout the county. I feel this is inappropriate and restricts what some landowners may wish to do with their property. The growth policy should take into account and build upon existing neighborhood plans and current zoning. Studies should be done to identify appropriate areas for residential, commercial and industrial development, and this information should be included in the growth policy.

**5. Water Quality.** I am sensitive to the protection of our natural environment, our quality of life and scenic resources. I am also aware of the strong connection between a clean environment and our vibrant economy. As residential and commercial development continues at full steam, we need to assure that the water quality of our

lakes and streams as well as our groundwater is not adversely impacted. I believe these things are going to require a lot of attention in the years ahead. This may mean looking at ways to connect more development to public water and sewer systems as well as other innovative ways to direct and encourage development to take place in appropriate places. I believe that a comprehensive growth policy should indicate which areas of the county are appropriate for residential, commercial and industrial development.

**6. Development on State Lands:** I understand the desire of the DNRC to generate money for the schools on the lands that they manage. However the Land Board, as trustee of the state lands has the responsibility to generate money for the schools in perpetuity, not just for today. I believe that selling the state owned land is a shortsighted attempt at deriving a quick one-time profit. We have what we have today because those that managed the lands before us resisted the temptation for such profit. Part of the reason the lands around Whitefish are so valuable is because of the recreational access they provide, as well as the clean water to the community. As Commissioner, my constituents are all of the residence of the county, and my responsibilities are to them, and the impact of this development on them. Any development or other uses must balance the needs of the state with the needs of the community. I do not agree with the current Commissioner's attempt to reduce the city-county planning jurisdiction for Whitefish. I believe that both city and county must agree on future use of these lands which are so critical to Whitefish's water supply, future growth, view sheds, etc.

Yes, State owned land should comply with local land use plans. Despite their best intentions, officials in Helena do not know the needs and desires of Flathead County better than local officials do. Therefore local land use plans should be adhered to.

**7. Leadership.** I am a fiscally conservative Republican, and I believe county government needs better management. To be an effective Commissioner, one must have managerial, leadership and budgetary experience. As Commissioner, I will draw on my 32 years of business experience as an aerospace engineer; managing large departments of engineers with complex multi-million dollar budgets, where quality was critical and cost and schedule were maintained. I plan to work with the cities of the Flathead County, and to make clear thoughtful decisions promoting an environment conducive to business that will bring us better jobs and better wages. That's what well-run government should do. If you elect me on June 8th I will be a County Commissioner that you will be proud of.

### Paul Holland, Republican

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Yes, I agree that our greatest economic asset is our natural and recreational amenities. The dichotomy here is that while development is the fuel feeding our growing, vibrant and diversified economy, that very development itself is what could put out the fire. People come here because it is beautiful, serene, pristine, uncomplicated, etc. The more

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## Candidates for Flathead County Commission, continued



### Paul Holland, continued...

people that come here for those reasons, the less meaningful each one is.

I believe we should lean toward clustered development. Instead of having four 5-acre lots on 20 acres we should have those same four lots all on 5 acres with 15 acres left as open area or farmland. Then we have the flexibility later to develop those lots as appropriate, whether commercial or residential or leave them open. Most visitors coming here are coming for Glacier National Park the core of our natural and recreational amenities, which is off limits to developers.

**2. Taxes and Cost of Growth:** 160 acres of wheat doesn't need a sheriff's office or fire department. 160 acres of houses do need these services and others. While our population grows our level of services and infrastructure provided by the county shrinks. We need to establish policies that will define funding sources for these needs, or reduce the pace of growth to the level we can afford, or some combination of both. We need to work out a way for the new people coming into our community to pay for the infrastructure that will be needed to service them in their new homes. The legislature can help by broadening our revenue scope. There are other revenue sources that need to be explored with public input. The additional revenue has to come from somewhere and I am like everyone else—I don't want it coming out of my pocket. At the same time, clean water is important to me, and roads, and law enforcement, and every department at the county offices.

**3. Commercial Development:** The county growth policy is one of our most important documents. The policy should be the standard for all development to live up to, commercial and residential. I agree with the planners that Highway 93 and Reserve seems to be an ideal location for commercial expansion. Once we set the first brick there it seems wise to encourage commercial development in that area. I believe some element of residential development should also be planned there, creating a diverse mix of the uses in a complimentary way.

If I were a sitting county commissioner, I would want to see a detailed market analysis of the project to determine for myself that there was a significant need for the expansion. I would also want assurances by the businesses involved that they have assessed the level of risk involved in the project and determined the risk to be well within their tolerance.

**4. Growth Policy:** I am in favor of clustered development. One of the benefits of this type of residential development is that we can service the residents with roads, sewer, utilities, street lighting, curbs, sidewalks, etc., all in a planned setting and have a much better place to live. We can't stop the influx of people but we can plan for their arrival.

I have not seen the draft you have referred to. I would be skeptical of reading too much into a draft of a plan. The board is probably looking for public input. When the planning board finishes the new growth policy they will have reviewed a lot more information than the average citizen could possibly have reviewed to make their proposal. I am grateful for their service.

**5. Water Quality:** We live in a beautiful place but

we are spoiling that place by installing 4000 private sewer systems per year in our fragile aquifers. There are small sewage treatment plants available that can be sized to meet the needs of subdivisions ranging from the smallest to the largest. The discharge effluent is potable water with little or no nitrates. We need to start using this new technology to resolve this very important issue. We need to set standards requiring new subdivisions, not connected to a sewer system, to build these small treatment plants.

We should be interfacing with the monitoring station on Flathead Lake and with Lake County as well to control the discharge by all streams into Flathead Lake.

**6. Development on State Lands:** Absolutely, state land development should be held to at least the standard, if not a higher standard, than commercial development. We have to be mindful of losing our beautiful views in the valley as we develop. Aesthetics and economics are not bed partners. Again, I say clustered development is the answer to conversion of timber and farmland to residential use. The good news of our strong economy can be directly linked to the vast swaths of undeveloped land.

In order to keep the new residents and new business coming we have to recognize what brought them here in the first place, the beautiful views, clean water, fishing, hunting and outdoor recreational opportunities. The trick is to balance our development plans with our amenities. The Flathead Valley is engaged in a tremendous change. New people are moving in with a new cultural view of the environment.

**7. Leadership:** There is about a two-year lag between when a house is built and when it starts paying for services through taxes. This lag between demand for service and corresponding resources has created a "credit card bill" at the county and every department is feeling the crunch. We have been delaying cost to "another day" and now "another day" is today.

We cannot keep doing the same thing and expect different results. You deserve county government that does the right thing, at the right time, every time. If you will vote for me for county commissioner I will promise you I will work very hard to resolve the challenges discussed here and others. I have worked hard for you on the Flathead Electric Board of Trustees and you can expect that same kind of commitment and trustworthiness when I become your county commissioner..

### Gail Seavy-Miles, Republican

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Yes. I read a study that claimed 51% of Montana's revenue was from tourism. They come for the beauty, yet we are seeing the corporate money monster swallow our county! As we lose our beauty to "parking lots" we will also lose our tourists! Retired loggers say, "logging should RETURN TO THE OLD WAYS of selective cutting" to recapture beautiful healthy forests. This has supported our "custom and culture" for generations, creating jobs while properly utilizing our natural resources. Fire killed timber should be properly removed (creating jobs) so as not to ENCOURAGE future fires. RESPONSIBLE GROWTH, NOT urban sprawl! WE cannot stop growth. But, in order to protect fertile land, new developments should utilize

smaller lots, existing homes (on sewer systems) should be encouraged to create multiples on single lots. I would find needed contracts for existing businesses already here, also endeavoring to BRING CLEAN non-polluting COMPANIES (with integrity) to Flathead County.

**2. Taxes and Cost of Growth:** We are already over taxed, the Commissioners are advocating more taxes and fees. They say the county cannot afford to fix our roads or furnish decent computer monitors to hard working employees (yet it can afford to let elected officials give THEMSELVES huge raises and buy them new cars)! Young families are forced to live in high priced rentals due to lack of affordable homes while old folks are forced out by high taxes that fixed incomes will not pay. The county budget needs to be analyzed carefully and waste should be cut, not jobs! Like my son's tiny town of 800 who could not afford more taxes, we too can utilize grant monies for road improvement - safety lighting, beautification, and other health & safety issues like dust pollution. They found grants, now their downtown has new sidewalks, lighting and paving where potholes, broken walks and dim street lights stood before.

**3. Commercial Development:** A much overdue growth policy as mandated by the State legislature should shape the county zoning policies and it should dictate the beauty of the developments as well as their location and zoning. I was born in a valley of luscious "bottom land." Growing up, tiny towns grew together. Now, freeways cut jagged lines, the air stinks, and ALL the farms are gone! Identical houses, malls and parking lots cover fertile soil where I once picked apricots. When we came here 30 years ago it was like coming home. Now the beautiful tourist magnet that this valley is slowly disappearing. We must DO SOMETHING NOW!

IF we have to have more commercial development - it should stay isolated from the residential areas. Since it has already begun between Whitefish and Kalispell - that is where it should stay, rather than sprawling all over the valley. AND minimal farmland should be used for this. The big box stores are ugly and should fit in more with the spirit of the valley.

VERY important as long as it is written from a neutral point of view and is not slanted or dictated by special interest groups. It should reflect the ACTUAL facts as to water, air, and quality of life issues. The general populace should have access to entering differing proven facts if there is a dispute.

**4. Growth Policy:** I am against the zoning change you mentioned. Farmland should be divided no smaller than 20 to 80 acre "mini-ranches." Farmers could still sell if they chose, but we would not lose the beauty and access to growing food if an emergency arose. New developments should utilize smaller lots, existing homes (on sewers, not septic) should be encouraged to create multiples on single lots without "overly stringent" permits

Realistically, we cannot stop growth, but we must seek RESPONSIBLE GROWTH. The existing growth plan committee is improperly formed and does not represent a fairly distributed CROSS SECTION of the ENTIRE community. It consists of many realtors and developers, there is no balance! It DOES NOT comply with NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED committee makeup

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## County Commissioner Candidates, continued

### Gail Seavy-Miles, continued...

guidelines. My mediation and "problem solving" experience should help achieve a happy balance through a EXPEDITED working growth plan that will both preserve our beauty and let us "grow gracefully."

**5. Water Quality:** It is not yet one of my areas of expertise, however, I believe all you say is probably true since I myself had trouble with my well in Bigfork last summer. It is the deepest well in the neighborhood and we still were out of water for about a week and the quality went down after that. I would have to study how to approach the problem further, but I would do whatever is necessary to protect our county water quality. It surely was no fun to have little things floating around in the murky water in my drinking glass.

**6. Development on State Lands:** I do not feel I have researched and analyzed it enough to answer. Time constraints do not allow me to do so at this time. I do, however, always keep an open mind, and once I make the best decision I can come to on the issue, I will always still be open to listening to any perspectives that I may have missed. The only thing that is constant is change and I am not afraid to admit I am wrong if necessary. Do you feel that the development of state-owned land should comply with local land use plans? Yes.

**7. Leadership:** "Illegal" sprawling growth, rising taxes, POLLUTION of our ground water by more septic instead of sewers, our officials giving themselves raises with OUR money WITHOUT OUR AUTHORIZATION THESE, and more, are the important issues we are facing. IF we make the wrong decisions, what will our valley look like in 20 years? -A planning expert recently said, "planning and zoning in Flathead County have gone off track and largely unchecked growth is threatening the things that make the Flathead a desirable place to live."

What can we do to re-set the course that we are already on? Through much research and analysis I laid out my plan on May 1st. A plan which allows the population to "grow gracefully" while at the same time: Keeping fertile farmland AND keeping our needed construction jobs and still NOT adding more taxes! (See the plan at (click on PLATFORM) or call 837-5427 for a copy) I want to LOOK CAREFULLY at each project as it is proposed.....and NOT say YES to almost everything, like I have seen in the recent records of the minutes of the County Commissioners. We DON'T just have to say just YES!

I am a woman FOR the people, offer a no "attitude" approach to local government, while always keeping an open mind to the voice of the public. Using my mediation experience I plan to use the art of compromise to stop the usual "spinning of the wheels." Having, "been there" after two years at Stream and being a blue collar worker in construction and upholstery work, I am FOR the "Workin' Man" and already have a plan in place to help bring more and better jobs to the county. I am also an advocate for the poor, oppressed and Senior Citizens. With my experience as an Administrative and Legal Analyst/Researcher and as the professional problem solver for an entire 9 campus University as well as experience as a building contracting business owner, I feel I have a lot more to offer the county than any of the other candidates.

### Allen (Chuck) Sieler, Republican

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** The Flathead's natural and recreational amenities are one of our greatest assets. Looking at the fires of the past few years one should be concerned about this asset.

Will Flathead Lake be a settling pond for ash and dirt from mountains deforested by fire? It appears one hand will now wash the other.

Harvesting, thinning and planting trees could solve the fire problem and create jobs. The investment is already here for this process. Quality growth is not produced with money. Planning produces it. Leaders need to say no to the mistakes of the past.

**2. Taxes and Cost of Growth:** Growth should have always paid for it self. Impact fees will help but are coming 15 years to late and are disliked by developers, contractors and real estate brokers. One way or another growth should be made to pay for it self. I will not raise property taxes.

**3. Commercial Development:** The key root word here is commerce. This suggests areas served by highways and railroads that are willing to accept light to heavy industry. This sounds like Columbia Falls. Other likely areas are highway 93 south from Kalispell to Somers, highway 93 North to the Stillwater River and all of LaSalle road. The West Side by-pass should maintain it character and not be commercial. We need areas of non-commercial development along our highways to preserve the character of our community. Zoning could have everything to do with shaping our community if adhered to.

**4. Growth Policy:** I know the goal of a few people is to sell off the valley in 5-acre lots or smaller take the profit and leave. This is the mining of land. We should encourage growth around cities where services are available. Healthy growth levels need to be determined and adhered to.

**5. Water Quality:** Our lakes can not be used as settling ponds for pollutants. New technologies studied for waste disposal.

**6. Development on State Lands:** A donut area around Whitefish should comply with local land use plans.

**7. Leadership:** I am a visionary. Except for land fills and cemeteries we have not been visionaries. In six years we will have space to bury garbage and the dead. Many problems will only get a short-term fix. My vision for our future is first an east side by pass for Kalispell and Evergreen near the Flathead River. Second helping Whitefish solve the big mountain transportation problem. Third revitalizing industry in Columbia Falls and Olney. Fourth caring for our watershed so vital to tourism in Bigfork, Somers and Lakeside. Fifth revitalizing the canyon from Hungry Horse to Essex capitalizing on tourism.

My commitment to the job. I will be a visionary planning ahead. I will be a full time commissioner. I will have no other job. I will have no other business. I will not belong to or be controlled by special interest groups.



## Candidates for State Legislature

Citizens for a Better Flathead asked all candidates for the Montana State Legislature the following five questions. Twelve candidates responded: Aaron Bouschor, John deNeeve, James Dettman, Shannon Hanson, Linda Jaquette, William Jones, Mike Jopek, Ivan Lorentzen, Jerry O'Neil, Bernie Olson, Jon Sonju, and Dan Weinberg. Their answers appear on pages 10 - 14.

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Numerous recent studies have found that our greatest economic asset is the Flathead's natural and recreational amenities. Do you agree with these findings? What can be done and what leadership is needed to help conserve this asset and attract the business investment that will create quality job growth in our county and around the state? Would you support strengthening our growth management laws to encourage more local planning?

**2. State Lands:** What is your position on requiring that state agencies and state activities comply with locally developed land use, transportation, and capital improvement plans?

**3. Taxes:** What tax issues do you see as important to address in the next legislature? For example, would you support, as has been proposed before, providing cities and counties the option of adopting a local sales tax, similar to what Whitefish now has? A tax on big box stores with sales over \$20 million will be introduced again in this legislature; would you support this? Do you see merit to the consideration of a real estate transfer tax as a tool to support local conservation of working agriculture and timberlands, affordable housing programs, and local planning?

**4. Transportation:** Transportation policy has significant impact on economic development of our urban centers, on land use patterns, and on the character and safety of our communities. Would you consider it a priority to support efforts to review our state's transportation policies and to look at best practices around the West that might help Montana get a much bigger bang for the billions we are spending on transportation?

**5. Streams and Rivers:** Would you support new legislation and rule making that increases the set back of buildings from our state's rivers, lakes, and streams in order to protect water quality, wildlife, and property from flooding?

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## Candidates for State Legislature, continued



### Senate District 2

#### Dan Weinberg, Democrat

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Our natural and recreational amenities are very important to our wonderful quality of life and our economic future. I am in favor of good planning—at the local and state levels-- that conserves these amenities for future generations of Montanans. State government should encourage small businesses through the formation of affordable health insurance groups and low interest loans for investment. Although I favor good local planning, I would evaluate growth management laws on a case-by-case basis.



**2. State Lands:** There are communities in Montana that provide excellent local planning that the State would do well to endorse. Unfortunately, there are other communities that show a lack of planning. For instance, we know that some communities don't appreciate the value of attractive roadways. For these, the State might have to provide the planning structure that the localities fail to achieve. Finding a balance in which State and local leaders work together to find common goals makes more sense. I do not assume that either the State or the localities always have the best solutions. I oppose the sale or trade of any School Trust Lands. State lands are our heritage and our economic future.

**3. Taxes:** The next legislature will have to come up with some tax solutions. School districts are making demands upon the State for more funding, with the courts backing them up. I don't want more taxes for Montanans, but we might need different taxes. The best thing the 2005 legislature could do would be to research the tax systems of the other 49 states. I think we should take a fresh look at our situation and find creative solutions that don't add a greater burden upon Montanans who are already overtaxed. I support holding "big box" stores accountable for the impact they have upon the infrastructure; however, I do not support a punitive tax upon them simply because some people don't care for that type of business. We need to be fair, and we need to hold people and businesses accountable for the impact they create.

**4. Transportation:** Transportation decisions determine development. For that reason, the Montana Department of Transportation must cooperate with county and local governments. MDOT should not impose itself upon locally derived plans, but rather, it should work cooperatively within locally determined development plans.

**5. Streams and Rivers:** I endorse the concept of protecting our waterways from pollution, and protecting property from flooding. I came out early to strongly protest Canada's plan to do coalbed methane drilling, which could pollute our rivers in the Flathead. I would need a better understanding of hypothetical setback requirements before lending my endorsement. I would ask, for instance, whether or not runoffs are a greater threat to our rivers than are setback standards.

### House District 3

#### Linda Jaquette, Democrat

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** I would agree with the studies, however that is at this time and unless protected, preserved and at the same time promoted it might not be true in the future. I would encourage small local value added industries. We need leaders who value our natural and recreational amenities for their own worth instead of the worth of only what can be extracted, leaders who have the vision to promote and grow these businesses. I would support strengthening our growth management laws to encourage more local planning.

**2. State Lands:** I would hope that this would be a cooperative effort. Rather than the "my way or the highway" mentality.

**3. Taxes:** Funding for education needs to be revisited, our children are the future of Montana. Ignorance is not a national resource. I would need more information to answer on taxing big box stores and real estate transfer taxes.

**4. Transportation:** I would consider it a priority to support efforts to review our state's transportation policies and to look at best practices around the West that might help Montana get a much bigger bang for the billions we are spending on transportation.

**5. Streams and Rivers:** Would support new legislation that increases the set back of buildings from our state's more sensitive areas in order to protect water quality, wildlife, and property from flooding.

### House District 4

#### Mike Jopek, Democrat

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Whitefish is quickly transforming into an economy based on our spectacular quality of life. We have good construction, professional, railroad, school and medical jobs, but it is our quality of life that is driving our growth. People come from all around the world to visit and recreate in our great outdoors. They are drawn by our plentiful public lands and clean water.

These visitors often return and plant roots. Once here they build homes and many start small businesses and become active in building our community. Visitors help us create local jobs, which will move us forward by growing our economy from within. With some creativity and some old-fashioned Montana neighborliness, we can enjoy the benefits of growth, while still protecting our traditional Montana heritage.

Cooperative, long-range planning and working together are good for progress. As chairman of the Whitefish City County Planning Board, I have seen that local and cooperative, long-range planning is vital to determining if we will continue to be a safe, convenient and healthy community.



**2. State Lands:** Currently there is tremendous pressure to privatize our public forests surrounding Whitefish. This is wrong and short sighted. These public lands in Happy Valley, Spencer Mountain, KM area, Beaver Lake, Haskill Creek and elsewhere serve our community well by providing access for sportsmen and recreationalists. They are the public amenities which drive our growth and create good jobs. It is this growth which funds our local schools.

Whitefish is a great place to raise a family, start and grow a small business, and build a community. I was one of the individuals who convinced the State to enter into a collaborative planning process with the community. Our heritage and economic vitality depend on good local input in these decisions.

At the state level, I will work to keep public lands public and help to grow small businesses, the heart of our community.

**3. Taxes:** I will not support any measure which increases the tax burden on working families, small businesses, and retired folks on fixed income. Whitefish has a voter approved tourist tax which has worked well to pave roads, provide bike paths, and give dollars back to property tax payers. During the next legislative session, I will work to assure that existing local programs are not affected by haphazard state revenue strategies.

Republicans and Democrats in Whitefish have been talking to me about our current appraisal system, big box store taxes and targeted tourist taxes. By working together and continuing this dialog into the January session, we can find solutions which work for the people of Whitefish, funds our schools and protects our working families, small businesses and retired folks from more taxes.

**4. Transportation:** State road construction and transportation policy need to incorporate local ideas. Safe roads are essential to both the economic vitality of our community and getting our kids to school. With your help, I will be a voice of reason in transportation planning. We need to keep business and community interest in mind in creating a safe and convenient road system. We must also assure that transportation needs do not create unsafe neighborhoods. Bike and pedestrian ways are an integral aspect of transportation. Over the course of my campaign to represent the people of the Whitefish area, I have learned that the people of the Valley are a pretty great people. That they are poorly served by their leadership and Helena is very much out of touch with the struggles of ordinary working families, small businesses and retired folks.

**5. Streams and Rivers:** As our community leaders look forward to the next decade of growth, we must consider our clean water. Our surrounding forests are our community's primary source of drinking water. The Whitefish watershed is encompassed by the Haskill Creek Basin and the hillsides surrounding the Lake. Poorly planned growth in these areas will harm our community. Without clean water and access to public lands our growth and quality of life will diminish.

We can have both a vibrant economy and a great quality of life. But we must commit to working together, regardless of political party. As the state continues to

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## Candidates for State Legislature, continued



### Mike Jopek, continued...

move forward in planning for our public lands around Whitefish, it is essential to protect our rivers, lakes and public recreational lands. These assets, after all, belong to the people of Montana and should not be privatized. This is your election; I am just a farmer and your candidate. If you would like to get involved, offer suggestions or guidance please contact me at 862-4380 or [www.mikejopek.com](http://www.mikejopek.com). Working together, we will win.

## Senate District 3

### John deNeeve, Democrat

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Essentially I agree with the overall assessments of the Flathead Gauges and the Gateway to Glacier reports about natural amenities and recreation as the engine behind economic development. Tourism is the second largest industry in Montana and is important in creating jobs, but it needs to be balanced with programs that ensure affordable housing and high paying jobs. This will be a huge challenge for the next legislature and for local government. Here are some ideas. I will support strengthening growth management laws that will help the community have more power in deciding its future. We need better paying jobs and I would endorse economic development for small business's in Montana, this would greatly benefit the local economy. I would also like to see the "Healthy Forest Initiative" program provide money to some good paying forest jobs in the Flathead. We could collaborate with the Forest Service, logging companies and environmental groups to formulate a sustainable program that helps the woods and protects the urban interface from wildfire.



**2. State Lands:** I agree wholeheartedly with the idea that state lands be developed with the land-use goals of the local community. I also feel strongly that open access to some of these lands need to be protected for outdoor recreation purposes.

**3. Taxes:** The major issue facing the next legislature will be to come up with enough revenue to meet the needs of a state government services and still provide enough money to meet the constitutional requirements of education. Large corporations will need to provide more funding (60% of them pay less than \$200 per year in state income taxes) and a box store tax can also add revenue. I would also endorse a real estate tax or developers tax to help support affordable housing and open space programs. I think local citizens should be able to decide about a city tax, but this should be up to the voters of the county. I would also explore the idea of a "visitors sales tax" that would allow Montana citizens to opt out of paying a sales tax by showing a drivers license or state I.D. card. This could add revenue to the state general fund for education and would lower property taxes for all homeowners.

**4. Transportation:** I will support a review of

transportation policy and see if there are better ways to enhance neighborhoods and city communities and avoid urban sprawl and strip development.

**5. Streams and Rivers:** Any legislation that increases setbacks from streams and rivers is very complex and must be done on a case by case basis. I support the essential idea of these laws but it must be done in a way that still protects the property rights of the owner.

### Jerry O'Neil, Republican

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** I believe our greatest economic asset is our hard working, free, intelligent population. The more they are left alone the more they will create and attract quality job growth and business investment. It is important that it be illegal to foul our neighbors' properties with our own actions and inactions.

**2. State Lands:** I believe that state agencies should attempt to get along with the various localities and their laws and customs while adhering to state laws.

**3. Taxes:** I believe in local control, but would look critically at any legislation which would induce Montana municipalities to increase taxes or impose regulations on property owners who reside outside of the city limits and are precluded from voting in the municipal elections. I believe a real estate transfer tax could backfire and cause municipalities to promote the sale of land in order to realize more tax revenue.

**4. Transportation:** I agree that we must review our state's transportation policies in order to get the biggest bang for the money we spend on transportation.

**5. Streams and Rivers:** I would support new legislation which would prevent property owners from receiving compensation from the government when their property floods. I do not believe government should relieve property owners from being responsible for their actions which cause pollution to our environment. I also support legislation which protects water quality and wildlife.

## House District 5

### Ivan Lorentzen, Republican

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** The natural beauty of Montana and the Flathead is well-known throughout the United States, and for that matter, throughout many parts of the world. At the same time residents cannot live on scenery alone – there needs to be a stable and growing economy to support and sustain the community. For many decades Montana, and the Flathead, relied heavily on extractive industries to provide a robust economy and tax base, and times were good. But most reasonable people will recognize that those days and those jobs are gone. Creating different jobs for the new economy and the new century is going to take new and creative thinking and a long-term strategy for economic growth, both locally and state-wide. But this will take time. I believe that the proposal developed by the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity is an excellent roadmap for economic development. Government should provide

the financial, technical and regulatory infrastructure from which existing and future private businesses could thrive. Government should provide the educational opportunities to train a 21st Century workforce which would be available to private companies wishing to expand and relocate here. And in all fairness, large corporations headquartered outside Montana should pay their share of Montana taxes as well. Population growth demands some type of land-use planning. Unregulated growth never produces beneficial results, and often leads to chaos. As painful and contentious as it is, planning is vital to the successful and continued growth of a community.

**2. State Lands:** I wish I could speak more clearly about this issue, but I cannot. I need to learn more. On the surface however, it seems that local land-use regulations should be recognized by state lands - they should serve to make land use more specific to local circumstances. Perhaps the question often centers around which set of regulations should take priority over the other. Jurisdiction over state lands does not rest solely with the state, who may not be aware of local conditions, and neither should local regulations always trump state regulations. They too may not be aware of state regulations.

**3. Taxes:** Montana's tax system needs to include a sales tax – a targeted revenue-neutral (or even tax-reducing) sales tax for Montana residents that would, in addition, capture significant additional revenue from the millions of tourists that visit the state each year. In my opinion state income and property taxes cannot continue to increase any further, and business taxes need to encourage business expansion and more fairly tax out-of-state corporations. It seems the only reasonable then, that Montana needs to identify an additional source of significant revenue. I believe we must seriously consider taxing the millions of non-resident tourists through a targeted sales-tax, as many other states do. This money should be used to reduce resident tax burdens and to infuse additional monies into education or infra-structure projects. Were the state not able to institute such a carefully-crafted sales-tax, local communities should be offered the opportunity to do so.

**4. Transportation:** Parameters that control highway construction have changed, and Montana needs to catch up. The impact of new highways on communities is large and complex, and the changes are not always beneficial. Transportation dollars need to be used for more than straight lines of pavement from point A to point B. Each project needs to be unique and reflect the character of the landscape and context of the community. Bike paths and public transportation are especially important in the larger population centers in Montana and should be a part of transportation funds. Wildlife concerns and livestock needs must also be considered when a new highway project bisects a community or landscape. Evidence will support a more context sensitive design of transportation needs. It may take a bit longer, but the final project will have the support of everyone involved.

**5. Streams and Rivers:** One-size-fits-all programs seldom work. Set back regulations from streams, rivers and lakes need to be negotiated by each community who best understands the local landscape.

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## Candidates for State Legislature, continued



### House District 6

#### Shannon Hanson, Democrat

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Yes I agree. Too often Montana's natural amenities are seen only as exploitable resources, or, only as pristine wilderness areas. To sustain a diverse economy we need to require sensible utilization of resources, encourage responsible use of public areas and preserve our wild lands. People move to Montana or choose to stay in Montana due to our legacy of clean air and water and access to recreational opportunities. Many of these people start or buy small businesses, providing a diverse economic base. It is important that leaders at all levels of government work to protect this legacy. We can do so by standing against radical groups on both ends of this issue, standing for industry which agrees to operate within Montana's air and water quality standards, and by providing tools and policies which encourage startup, growth and expansion of good small businesses.



**2. State Lands:** State lands are owned by all people of the state and management is entrusted to agencies which represent the people of Montana. These agencies should be required to comply with local plans so long as doing so does not violate, commonly established state guidelines provisions of state law or the constitution.

**3. Taxes:** The single most pressing issue in the next legislative session is likely to be school funding. This will require a hard look at not only how we spend the taxpayer money but how we raise the money needed to run the state. One option that continually bubbles to the surface is a general sales tax. Although I have problems with the regressive nature of sales tax I would not rule out support of a properly formatted state sales tax. Localities should have the ability to adapt local option taxes to meet specific needs unique to each area. Large box stores sole interest in our states economy is extractive. I believe a 'tax' on such activity is reasonable. A Portion of the funds generated from such a 'tax' should be used to aid small businesses which are hurt by these box stores.

**4. Transportation:** It is absolutely essential; that we review our policies regarding transportation at the state, regional, county and city levels. Transportation costs can factor heavily into the final price of goods and services we purchase. The very life of some Montana communities, notably those on the highline hinge on proper transportation decisions.

**5. Streams and Rivers:** The short answer is yes. However these decisions need review on a case by case basis.

### House District 7

#### James Dettman, Democrat

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Yes, I agree that "our greatest economic asset is the Flathead's natural and recreational amenities." "To help conserve this asset and attract the business investment that will create quality job growth in our county and around the state" we need cooperative planning with input from varied sources in our communities. The old adage "to fail to plan is to plan to fail" has a core of truth. We also need to make sure we consider the ideas of a diverse cross section of our citizens, and we need a spirit of cooperation among the many people involved in planning. Yes, I would "support strengthening our growth management laws to encourage more local planning."



**2. State Lands:** I think we should require "that state agencies and state activities comply with locally developed land use, transportation and capital improvement plans."

**3. Taxes:** I think the most important tax issue the next legislature needs to address is fairness in taxation. I think it's time to ask the very large corporations and the extremely wealthy to take on their fair share. I think giving them tax breaks in hopes that the benefits will "trickle down" has been proven false. Yes I would support "a tax on big box stores with sales over \$20 million."

**4. Transportation:** Yes I would "support efforts to review our state's transportation policies and to look at best practices around the West that might help Montana get a much bigger bang for the billions we are spending on transportation."

**5. Streams and Rivers:** Yes I would "support new legislation and rule making that increases the set back of buildings from our state's rivers, lakes and streams in order to protect water quality, wildlife and property from flooding."

#### Jon Sonju, Republican

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** The Flathead area has a strong tourism based economy. We need to continue to support tourism along with other business areas. We have excellent tools to encourage job creation here in the valley. Our Chamber of Commerce(s), Small business development center and programs such as Jobs Now must see continued support. There are many opportunities available and we need identify them and create more job opportunities. I would like to see the Flathead have a diversified healthy economy.



**2. State Lands:** I would like to see more partnerships between local and state officials so we all can win on State Land Issues.

**3. Taxes:** I am for no new taxes. The people of the State are taxed enough especially our senior citizens. I question that a tax on big box stores may create more taxes on the people. I am for streamlining government and making state and local department heads accountable.

**4. Transportation:** I am for any efforts that would help Montana get a much bigger bang for the billions we are spending on transportation. One solution is to bridge a gap between federal and State officials to ensure Montana has the best plan available in transportation dollars.

**5. Streams and Rivers:** Montana has pristine streams and rivers; I would like them to stay that way. I believe there are compromises in many situations that can be utilized on a case by case basis.

### House District 9

#### William Jones, Republican

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Patricia and I are third generation Montanan's married for forty years. I practice Dentistry in Kalispell and Live at Echo Lake. Our first child Annette died while I was serving in Korea (Army), Jim teaches math-science at Troy, Dan teaches science at Harrison and considers leaving, Dave practices dentistry with me in Kalispell, Karly is a dietitian-social worker in Minneapolis and Doni is a newly graduated science teacher on her way to Wyoming. I am concerned that Montana children are being forced to leave. Legislation that affects local planning needs public input and direction. My legislative responsibility includes asking who is directly affected and what the hundred year consequences are. My concern is destroying our culture with our rush for growth. Quality of life for the people that are here and our future generations are my priorities. All sectors of our economy are important and should be treated fairly

**2. State Lands:** I am most concerned with the rush to dispose, trade, develop and relinquish our State Lands. Special interest groups have taken advantage of us in the past and are hard at work to grab more. All the political candidates need to be closely questioned on State Land issues. We need a more thoughtful deliberate process on State Land Management. Ask your candidates why the big rush? You need to get informed, involved and stop expecting someone else to save your heritage.

**3. Taxes:** Education lawsuit is a declaration of war on the taxpayers, welfare recipients and other agencies. Law enforcement, prisons, Univ. system, city, county governments, and social services also need financing. Campaigning door to door has been enlightening. Voters tell me they do not want others hungry, cold or hurting but they object to waste. They support education but question the efficiency and total spending. The Public tells me they have to set priorities in their private spending and expect the same with their tax dollars. We need to get a higher percentage of the money we spend on the table of the poor and in the classroom. I will bring these concerns to the legislature. Lawsuits are the wrong way to solve problems. When you declare war the

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## Candidates for State Legislature, continued



### William Jones, continued

outcome is unpredictable. We have a complex unfair anti-business tax system created by people not willing to pay their share of the public services they demand. I object to groups trying to saddle someone else with additional taxes. I object to industries having special tax programs to benefit themselves.

**4. Transportation:** Yes I will support transportation review. Sidewalks and bike paths are in short supply. In Kalispell you cannot safely walk on Center Street or from downtown to the hospital area. In Woods Bay you risk your life to walk to the store. In the Many Lakes area the volunteer fire dept. cannot safely access homes. We are paying a big price for our poor planning efforts. We are driving big vehicles because we are rightly afraid of the unnecessarily high risk of an accident.

**5. Streams and Rivers:** Support of legislation depends on the details. Careful consideration must be given to all sides especially the people directly affected. Unfortunately we allowed subdivisions on our lakes with tiny lots. I live on an Echo Lake lot that has less than 100 feet from high water line to the back of the lot. We need better standards on future subdivisions. Whitefish and Flathead Lakes have become private lakes with tiny crowded public access sites. We are building an economy that focuses on selling our prime recreational properties to the elite and excludes the general public. We need to examine our political priorities.

## House District 10

### Aaron Bouschor, Democrat

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** It is absolutely essential that we do our utmost to promote the Flathead Valley as a recreation center and vacation destination. In the long-term outlook, the economy of the Flathead will be increasingly based on tourism and it is necessary that we protect this resource through sensible development of the area, as well as encourage the establishment of more small businesses to provide more tourist and recreational opportunities. We need to realize that the Montana economy is rapidly changing and that the only way we can successfully respond to these changes is by adapting our ways of promoting the state. In high growth areas like the Flathead Valley, I believe that we can actively promote the development of our tourist base while at the same time encouraging high tech and modern companies to call the Flathead Valley home by making them aware of our growing population base and great services.

**2. State Lands:** Local input is crucial when making any decisions with regards to the use of state lands but we should also consider the big picture goals of the state with respect to land use and important spending areas like



education. When making any decision, open communication and discussion should be the first step we should take with regards to our use of state lands.

The specific needs and desires of growing areas like the Flathead Valley should be considered but the long-term impact of development and potential damage to future recreation based revenue should also be considered when making any decision that could be of impact. If local communities are able to work together with state agencies that manage state lands then we should be able to arrive at solutions that will satisfy both parties. As a member of the legislature I will encourage increased dialogue to come to workable solutions.

**3. Taxes:** It is likely that the issue of a sales tax will once again come before the legislature as a means of dealing with the budget crisis. I do not support a sales tax and I believe most Montanans are also not in favor of one. What we need instead is tax reform that attempts to close many of the tax loopholes developed for special interests that have been created over the past 10 years. These have been a primary cause of the revenue shortfall that has crippled our state's ability to provide essential services like education and health care. I would be in support of a tax on big box stores with sales over \$20 million as they are a growing factor in Montana's economy and take a good deal of business away from our locally owned and operated small businesses.

**4. Transportation:** One of my top priorities as a member of the state legislature will be to review our transportation funding policies so that we can increase spending on transportation and infrastructure in Montana. In growing areas like the Flathead Valley it will be essential that we improve our means of transportation and begin to consider the need for increased public transportation as the valley grows as well as the need for better highways and roads that will ensure the safety of our motorists as traffic increases. This will require a reevaluation of our spending policy and our use of federal tax dollars in order to make it happen and I will be in favor of establishing a commission to review our transportation spending and see how it can best be put to use for our changing state.

**5. Streams and Rivers:** Yes, I believe that it is essential that we protect our streams and rivers, which in the long-term will pay off in the betterment of our environment and the economy. Increasing the set back of buildings will be beneficially both to the environment and individuals along the river who are at the risk of flooding and potentially losing their possessions. Montana is fortunate enough to have some of the greatest natural water areas in the world and we should do what we can to protect them for future generations and for future visitors who bring a good deal of tourist dollars into the state when they come to enjoy our natural resources. Furthermore, it is important that we preserve access to rivers and streams so that sportsmen and women can enjoy them. As a member of the legislature I will strongly support and defend the Montana Stream Access Law.

### Bernie Olson, Republican

**1. Job Creation and Planning:** Flathead County does have great natural resources and recreation value that entices tourism. There is no question that it should allow the county to be much more prosperous than it is. The rub is that the Federal government and the State control approximately 80% of the land in the county. This limits the property tax base which is necessary for the support of education and



other county services. The state does a good job of using the land under its control to create income through timber harvest, land leases, etc. The Federal government which controls the bulk of land (approximately 70%) has not done so well. Payment in lieu of taxes is a poor substitute for well managed timber harvest or other resource development. We have millions of acres of wilderness and park land that is and will be protected in perpetuity. Existing laws protect the development of the rest to legally approved methods.

If we want to attract businesses that will bring good paying jobs we need to allow the 18 to 20% of the county that is private property to be available for development without long and expensive processes that make it difficult for new business to start or existing business to expand. We have plenty of laws currently that regulate growth and development. Lets wait to see how they work before we add to them.

Remember that tourism brings many people to the valley and their money as well, but the tourist related jobs are low paying and seasonal, they are not the basis of a strong and healthy economy. We have a high unemployment rate in the Flathead and low income per-capita compared to the national average. Out of state second home owners may pay property taxes, but not income taxes and they drive up the cost of real estate beyond what local residents can afford.

My efforts have and will continue to stress the development of Montana's resources in gas, oil, timber, hard rock mining and coal production. We need to use our resources to generate electric energy to meet our own and the nations needs. It is estimated that Montana has coal resources approaching 120 billion tons, first in the nation. Each ton of Montana coal is the equivalent of 31/2 barrels of oil which means over 400 billion barrels. A Saudi Arabia sized resource that we have barely touched. Energy independence and wealth right here at home. It makes no sense to ignore Montana's potential. Why should our state be at the bottom of the economic heap? We have been called "the last best place", but more aptly it could be said that we are "the best last place". I support development, to bring good jobs for working Montanans, encourage business investment and provide a broader tax base to support public education, health care, veterans services, public safety, transportation, etc.

## State Legislature Candidates, continued from page 13

### Bernie Olson, continued

**2. State Lands:** The state legislature has through a number of laws directed the State Department of Lands and Natural Resources to maximize income from state lands in support of public education. State law supercedes local law and regulations and that should not change. State lands are for the benefit of all the state not just those at some local level that have a special interest that benefits a small minority.

**3. Taxes:** Taxes are a difficult issue because there are many competing views as to how tax reform should take place. I am open to any ideas that would lead to a reduction in property taxes and income taxes (especially capital gains) and spread the burden to a greater number of individuals. That may well require some type of sales tax, either local or state wide.

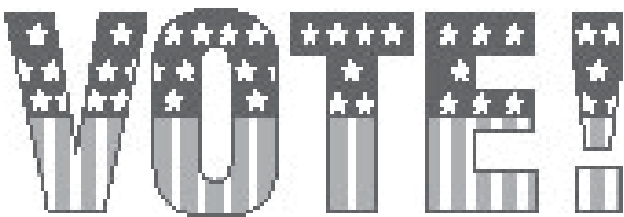
The "Big Box" store tax on those with sales over \$20 million needs to be looked at carefully. If the idea is to tax out of state corporations then the dollar amount may be too low. There are likely to be some in state stores that meet that level and we may create an unintended consequence with this approach.

A real estate transfer tax is not something that I would favor if the purpose is to use the money to further control private lands through more restrictive planning programs.

**4. Transportation:** I served on the House Transportation Committee in the last session and it is apparent that Montana is doing everything possible to leverage Federal dollars. We have one of the highest fuel tax rates in the nation. I would not support raising the rate any more.

**5. Streams and Rivers:** Montana has adequate laws regarding the set back of buildings from lakes, rivers and streams. Suggestions for changes in the past have been defeated for good reason and I will oppose any changes to existing regulations.

## Remember to



## Tuesday, June 8

## Worlds Apart, continued from page 3

seeking direction on issues to be addressed in the revised growth policy. The recently released draft growth policy states that it was developed after "extensive public input." No minutes have been kept of the planning board monthly meetings on the growth policy since these neighborhood hearings, so there is no record of board discussion of this public input and no record of how it has been summarized. In an attempt to review the relationship between the recently released new draft county growth policy and the public comments to date, CFBF requested copies of all public comments submitted. We were provided a box that contained all comments to date. To bridge the apparent gap in analysis of public input, CFBF staff has analyzed and summarized findings from this public record.

While this public comment has come from only some 300 county residents to date, it does provide an interesting pulse on a cross section of the public and their perspectives on the scope of county planning needed for the future. Most significantly, however, this public comment does not provide the county planning board with a mandate for making many of the sweeping and significant planning policy revisions included in the new draft growth policy. (See related article on page 1.) Instead, this public comment reflects some important common ground that should be used by the planning board to shape a new growth policy. Fundamental to this common ground is the recognition that while growth is inevitable, poorly planned growth is not.

In addition to the comments of some 160 individuals who commented or asked questions during the neighborhood meetings, another 69 handwritten responses to a county-generated questionnaire were received by the county planning board. There were 12 letters submitted for the public record as well. Another 53 individuals completed a survey form provided in Citizens For A Better Flathead's March 2003 newsletter and submitted these for the record of the planning board. Residents from West Valley also circulated a survey that 12 people submitted to the Planning Board. At most, a total of 306 individuals submitted comment for the public record, but it is impossible to determine exactly how many different citizens contributed input because the majority of the county questionnaires were anonymous. It is possible that many people who spoke at the town hall meetings also filled out a county-generated questionnaire since they were distributed at the town hall meetings.

In analyzing the public input, 10 key issues emerged as being important to those who commented. They include the following:

- We Need More, Not Less Planning.

Responding to the county questionnaire, 71% answered yes to the question of "Do you want more planning in Flathead County?" Responding to a similar question in the CFBF questionnaire, 100% indicated they wanted more planning. From the neighborhood meetings' minutes only some 14 individuals stated that they thought that property owners should be able to do what ever they wanted with their property.

- **Growth Should Pay Its Own Way.** When asked in the county questionnaire if Flathead County should charge impact fees, 57% said yes, while 41% said no. When asked a similar question in the CFBF questionnaire the response was 97% yes and 2% no. Nine individual comments during the neighborhood meetings asked that growth be made to pay its own way or that tax options be considered to more fairly and effectively address these concerns. Six individuals raised concerns about using annexation as a way to require development in Evergreen and elsewhere to meet city standards. City standards include features like curbs, sidewalks, street lights, storm water systems, and roads built to set standards, and they require the payment of city taxes for increased fire, police, and other infrastructure services.

- **Planning Tools Should Be Provided to Encourage High Quality Growth and Greater Predictability.** A variety of planning tools were mentioned and encouraged for inclusion in the new growth policy. The most basic tool, zoning, received a thumbs up from 57% of those responding to the county questionnaire asking if more of the county should be zoned; 47% supported zoning the entire county, while 50% did not support that scope of zoning. A similar question in the CFBF questionnaire that asked if the growth policy should direct new development toward existing towns and received 100% positive response. A similar question in regards to encouraging commercial development to be directed toward down towns received 94% support. Neighborhood Plans were praised by nine individuals attending the neighborhood meetings and four people want to see limits on development in the North Fork, which is covered by a neighborhood plan. Cluster Development received a 92% endorsement from those responding on the CFBF questionnaire, and five people spoke in favor of this tool at the neighborhood meetings. There were, however, two people who did not think that cluster development was a good idea. Consistency with existing development, neighborhood plans, and zoning was noted as important by eight folks speaking at the neighborhood hearings. Buffers and nuisance ordinances were also noted as important to two people speaking at the neighborhood meetings. Purchase of development rights programs and

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## Worlds Apart, continued from page 14

sliding scale zoning were suggested as other tools to be considered. A number of folks also spoke about the need for more parks.

- **Design Standards Should Be Put in Place.** In response to a question the county asked, 77% of those responding supported the use of design standards and design review in contrast to 15% who had mixed feelings on the issue and 8% who saw no need for standards. A similar question on the CFBF questionnaire focusing on conserving the unique and historical character of our towns and neighborhoods registered 64% in support. A variety of comments also focused on the need for standards to ensure that our highway corridors and entrances be inviting and scenic.

- **Protecting Water Quality is a Top Priority.** As other questionnaires have consistently shown, this issue is very important to Flathead county residents. Protection of shallow aquifers, limiting development in floodplains and wetlands, greater setbacks from streams, and the need to more carefully consider and monitor the impacts of individual septic systems on water quality were raised in meetings and questionnaires.

- **Preservation of Agricultural Land and Open Space Need Careful Consideration.** At the neighborhood meetings the importance of conserving agricultural lands received more individual comments than any other topic with 31 people speaking to the need to provide a variety of tools to achieve this goal. However, 10 people wanted farmers to have greater ability to sell off their land more easily. Opinion was closely divided on a county questionnaire item that asked if private property should be purchased to expand open space with 48% saying

yes and 47% saying no. There was also recognition that some farmers face difficult challenges in staying in farming when faced with medical or financial difficulties and 67% said they should be provided an option to subdivide with 26% percent saying more choices should be provided first and 11% opposed to such reasons for subdivisions. Three separate questions from the CFBF questionnaire queried about the importance of agricultural lands and the need to explore options that would conserve them. All received ratings of 83% or higher as very important. Another question on the importance of conserving access to public lands and water bodies received a 92% rating of importance.

- **Affordable Housing is an Important Need.** Some 64% of those responding to the county questionnaire felt that the growth policy should address the issue of affordable housing, though 16% disagreed. Offering incentives to developers to include affordable housing in new developments was seen as important to 74% of those completing the CFBF questionnaire.

- **Pedestrians, Bikes, and Cars are All Important.** Several questions in the CFBF questionnaire asking about transportation issues found safe and expanded access for walking and biking received 92% and 91% backing. Six people spoke in support of this in neighborhood meetings while others noted the importance for aesthetics in planning highway corridors and the need to address long-range transportation plans and road improvement in the growth policy.

While almost everyone replying to a question on the need for a bypass from US 93 to US 2 agreed on this need (96%), they were not convinced that

Willow Glen/Conrad Drive was a viable route with 44% supporting it, 39% opposing it, and 10% still unsure.

- **Greater Opportunities for Public Input are Needed.** Respondents to the CFBF survey were queried about support for the idea of asking developers to post visible signs on property they are seeking to develop as an important form of notice to neighbors and asking that developers of major subdivisions or commercial projects be required to hold pre-planning board question and answer sessions in affected neighborhoods. These questions drew support of 92% and 96% respectively from those replying to the CFBF questionnaire. Five people attending the neighborhood meetings spoke to the need for the county to do a better job of publicizing meetings and gathering public input, particularly in the process of updating the county growth policy. Several comments were very critical of the disrespectful way the public was treated at these neighborhood meetings by the planning board.

- **Cooperative planning is still important,** yet responses to the questionnaires and comments at meetings reflect continuing frustration with both lack of cooperation and some existing forms of cooperation between city and county government. Seven people spoke against joint city-county planning areas and three spoke in favor of them at neighborhood meetings. Those responding to a question on the issue of rebuilding cooperative planning in the CFBF questionnaire urged rebuilding cooperation, with 96% seeing this as important.

### Public Comments Submitted on Growth Policy Reveal: What are the top 5 reasons you have chosen to live in the Flathead?

**Availability of affordable housing: 6%**

**Lower cost of living: 8%**

**It's a good place to retire: 8%**

**Employment opportunities: 8%**

**Other: 9%**

**Low crime rates: 9%**

**Hunting and/or fishing opportunities: 9%**

**Cultural resources and activities: 11%**

**To run my own business: 15%**

**Quality of the schools: 19%**

**Historic rural character of our towns: 19%**

**Less traffic: 36%**

**To be part of a small community: 43%**

**The beauty and charm of the area: 70%**

**Great outdoor recreational opportunities: 70%**

**Open space and access to public lands: 70%**

**Quality of the environment: 89%**

# Asked in the Valley...

by Melanie Fortino

## Josie Hageadone, 16

1. People from other states moving in. You see the farmland as they sell it off as 12 to 14 houses on an acre. They are using up the farmland as the population grows. The houses are getting bigger, too.

2. Living on the farm. Living a simple life.



Citizens for a Better Flathead asked five students from Flathead High School the following questions:

*1. What are the biggest changes you've seen in the Flathead Valley, both good and bad?*

*2. What do you like most about growing up in the Flathead?*

## Katie Cahill, 16

1. It is not such a small community anymore. It used to be that everyone knew each other, not so much now.

2. There are places to go like Flathead



Lake and the mountains, instead of being in town all the time. It's a really safe place to grow up.



## Christine Wood, 15

1. The inflation cost on property, it's getting really expensive to live here. Also, the unwise choices of where they are deciding to build houses.

2. Everyone smiles when you smile at them. Where I lived in Washington, people didn't smile at you.



## Brian Bennett, 16

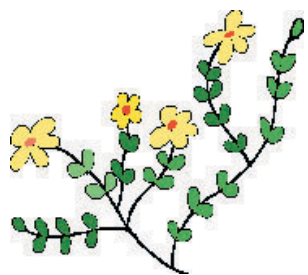
1. There are definitely a lot more people, and a lot more traffic.

2. There are a lot more opportunities to get involved at school, with sports and other things. Being able to drive at 15 is pretty cool.

## Marilyn Bennett, 17

1. There are a lot more subdivisions and more houses coming in. The farmers have to sell their land because farming isn't making enough money.

2. I love living in the country. I love the freedom, and not having a bunch of houses right there- not having my neighbors five feet in front of me.



Your membership dollars support our work to preserve the economic, cultural, and ecological health of the Flathead Valley. Call 756-8993 for more information.

### CITIZENS FOR A BETTER FLATHEAD • 2004 MEMBERSHIP FORM

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- \$250 Sponsor
- \$100 Hometown Hero
- \$50 Contributor
- \$35 Family
- \$25 Individual
- \_\_\_\_\_

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

