

Front Page News

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County election races are set

By Chris Bristol of the Daily Courier



Races for county commissioner in Josephine County and Jackson County took shape Tuesday, the last day to file for the May 21 primary election.

In Josephine County, four candidates have filed to replace two-term Commissioner Dan DeYoung, who is stepping down after years of public service that began as a member of the Grants Pass City Council.

The candidates for DeYoung's Position 2 are: Dan Mancuso, publisher of the Illinois Valley News, making his second run at county commissioner; Chris Barnett, a real estate broker and local radio personality; Mark Jones, a retired firefighter, also making his second run; and Colene Martin, a Grants Pass real estate broker, businesswoman and former president of the Grants Pass & Josephine County Chamber of Commerce.

Gary Richardson, longtime member of the Grants Pass School Board, withdrew from the race Tuesday. In 2022, he finished third in an eight-way race for the seat now held by John West.

Also up for grabs is the Position 3 seat held by Commissioner Herman Baertschiger Jr., who danced around the topic of a second term but ultimately chose to step back, if not down, after a political career that included eight years in the Oregon Senate. A poll conducted in Josephine County by Salem-based Nelson Research last November showed 55% of respondents said they either "strongly" disapproved or "somewhat" disapproved of the way the current Board of Commissioners, Baertschiger included, is handling its job.

As with the other race, there are four candidates: Ron Smith, a supervisor for a commercial sign business now making his fifth run at commissioner; Pat Fahey, a businessman who also serves on the boards of Rogue Community College and the local library district; Nathan Gonzales, a small-business owner; and Russell McAlmond, a personal financial counselor.

The two commissioner races had been set for weeks, and there were no last-minute filings or switcheroos like in 2020, when Baertschiger's attempt to take out then-Commissioner Lily Morgan resulted in a confusing shuffle at the filing deadline.

In commissioner tests in Josephine County with more than two candidates, the top two vote-getters advance to a runoff in November. That is, unless any one candidate wins more than 50% of the vote.

The only other competitive race on the Josephine County ballot is for county treasurer. Eve Arce, the longtime incumbent now seeking her fourth term, drew a challenge from

Mark DeYoung, who listed himself as not currently employed but as having 34 years of experience in banking, retail, leadership and financial services.

Whereas all was quiet on the filing front in Josephine County, the action was hot and heavy at the county clerk's office in Medford.

A flurry of last-day filings resulted in a total of five candidates for Dave Dotterrer's seat on the Jackson County Board of Commissioners — three of them in the last 24 hours. Dotterrer chose not to seek reelection.

Leading the list is Randy Sparacino, the mayor of Medford and retired police chief. He has a high profile, having narrowly lost a race for an Oregon Senate seat to incumbent Jeff Golden in 2022.

Jackson County races are partisan, and Sparacino filed as a Republican. That means he will face two challengers in the GOP primary: David Arrasmith, the assessor of Jackson County, and Logan Leverette Vaughan, who implied on a filing form that he lives in a tent and listed his occupation as "Ambassador of HIS GRACE/SLAVE."

The winner of the primary will go on to face one of two candidates who filed as Democrats: Rebecca Mueller, a pediatrician at Providence Eagle Point; and Denise Krause, a health data consultant best known as chief organizer of Jackson County charter rewrite measures that just qualified for the ballot.

There are no other competitive races in Jackson County for county office. Justice of the Peace Joe Charter briefly had a challenger, but she dropped out after conceding she was not a member of the Oregon State Bar, a prerequisite for the office.

Notably, Arrasmith is giving up his assessor's office to run for commissioner.

In addition to the commissioner races, the ballots in Jackson and Josephine counties will both feature charter measures that will dramatically rework the structure of government in both counties if voters say yes.

Jackson County has a trio of measures — 15-224, 15-225 and 15-226 — that collectively would make county commissioner races nonpartisan, expand the number of commissioners from three to five, and reduce their salaries.

Josephine County's Measure 17-116 is similar but with degrees of distinction. It also would expand the Board of Commissioners from three members to five and reduce their salaries, and it would enshrine that elected county office is nonpartisan.

However, it also calls for the hiring of a professional manager, much the way Jackson County is run. And it would make the positions of county legal counsel and surveyor appointed, not elected.

There is only one other measure on the ballot in Josephine County — a request to increase the animal services levy from 11 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value to 47 cents. That works out to \$47 a year per \$100,000 of property value.

If passed, 19.4 cents of the new levy would be earmarked for structural improvements to the worn-out county animal shelter in Merlin and would be eliminated once they are paid for. The remaining 27.6 cents would stay on the books for operational costs and would come up for a vote for renewal in five years.

There are several more measures on the ballot in Jackson County, depending on where you live.

In the Wimer area north of Rogue River, residents of the Evans Valley Fire District are being asked to renew a levy for five years at an increased rate of 36 cents per \$1,000 to \$1.35. That's about \$135 a year per \$100,000 of property value.

In Ashland, voters will be asked to make the city recorder position one that is filled by appointment, not elected.

And in parts of the Applegate Valley, voters who live in a slice of the Three Rivers School District will be asked to approve a 16-year construction bond at a rate of 55 cents per \$1,000, or about \$55 a year per \$100,000 of property value.

The bond would pay for a number of safety and security measures at district facilities, including additional fencing, buzz-in entry systems, cameras, key card entry, security lighting and security doors and hardware.

It would also pay for reroofing every school building in the district except for Illinois Valley High School, which was recently replaced.

Reach city editor Chris Bristol at 541-474-3716 or cbristol@thedailycourier.com.

Primary election candidates

Below are the local and regional candidates for the May 21 primary election as listed by the Oregon secretary of state, the Josephine County clerk and the Jackson County clerk on their respective websites:

OREGON SENATE DISTRICT 2

Democratic primary

Tracy Thompson, Grants Pass

Republican primary

Christine Goodwin, Canyonville

Noah Robinson, Cave Junction

OREGON SENATE DISTRICT 28

Democratic primary

None

Republican primary

Dave Henslee, Merrill

Diane Linthicum, Beatty

OREGON HOUSE DISTRICT 3

Democratic primary

Mark Seligman, Selma

Dustin Watkins, Grants Pass

Republican primary

Dwayne Yunker, Grants Pass

OREGON HOUSE DISTRICT 4

Democratic primary

Richard Chasm, Winston

Republican primary

Alek Skarlatos, Winston

OREGON HOUSE DISTRICT 5

Democratic primary

Pam Marsh, Ashland

Republican primary

Sandra A. Abercrombie, Medford

Katherine Green, Ashland

OREGON HOUSE DISTRICT 6

Democratic primary

Lillia Caballero, Medford

John P. Holm, Medford

Republican primary

Kim Wallan, Medford

OREGON HOUSE DISTRICT 56

Democratic primary

None

Republican primary

Jonah Hakanson, Klamath Falls

Emily McIntire, Eagle Point

DISTRICT ATTORNEY, JOSEPHINE COUNTY

Joshua Eastman

JOSEPHINE COUNTY COMMISSIONER, POSITION 2

Chris Barnett, Grants Pass

Mark F. Jones, Grants Pass

Dan Mancuso, Cave Junction

Colene Martin, Grants Pass

JOSEPHINE COUNTY COMMISSIONER, POSITION 3

Pat Fahey, Grants Pass

Nathan Gonzales, Grants Pass

Russell McAlmond, Grants Pass

Ron Smith, Grants Pass

JOSEPHINE COUNTY ASSESSOR

Chris Parton, Selma

JOSEPHINE COUNTY TREASURER

Eve Arce, Grants Pass

Mark DeYoung, Grants Pass

JOSEPHINE COUNTY SURVEYOR

Peter Allen, Grants Pass

DISTRICT ATTORNEY, JACKSON COUNTY

Alyssa Bartholomew

Patrick Green

JACKSON COUNTY ASSESSOR

Angela Stuhr, Jacksonville

JACKSON COUNTY COMMISSIONER, POSITION 2

Democratic primary

Denise Krause, city withheld

Rebecca Mueller, Medford

Republican primary

David Arrasmith, Central Point

Randy Sparacino, Medford

Logan Leverette Vaughan, Medford

JACKSON COUNTY SURVEYOR

Scott Fein, Ashland

JACKSON COUNTY JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

Joe Charter, city withheld

U.S. HOUSE, 2ND DISTRICT

Democratic primary

Steve William Laible, Grants Pass

Dan Ruby, Ashland

Republican primary

Jason Beebe, Prineville

Cliff Bentz, Ontario