

# ELECTION COVERAGE

## BONNER COUNTY ASSESSOR

### We asked the three candidates running for Bonner County Assessor a few questions:

1.) What, in your view, are the most important responsibilities of the county assessor?  
4.) What should be the priorities of the office moving forward?

2.) What are your qualifications for the job?  
5.) Is there any specific message you want to send to voters prior to the election?

3.) What motivated you to get into the race?

### DENNIS ENGELHARDT

Republican



**AGE:** 66

**BIRTHPLACE AND RESIDENCE:** Milwaukee, Wis., -Sagle

**GOVERNMENT SERVICE:** United States Marine Corps, 30 years law enforcement, Bonner County Waste Management Advisory Board, Sagle Fire District Board of Commissioners

**PROFESSION:** Law enforcement, retired

**EDUCATION:** Associate degree in criminal justice; bachelor degree in vocation education, training and development; multiple supervisory, management, admin and budget-related certifications; negotiations and critical incident management certifications.

**FAMILY:** Wife Dana, six children, and 12 grandchildren.

**FUN FACT:** For actions taken while deployed in Vietnam, Dennis was awarded the Navy Achievement Medal with combat "V" for leadership of his Marine squad which, while on patrol, discovered and destroyed a six-story enemy bunker.

1. Well if you are referring to Idaho state statutes, the most important County Assessors operational responsibility are: First, conduct valuations of taxable properties within their county following Idaho statutes and rules. Second, as an agent of the Department of Transportation, to title and register vehicles and collect related fees and taxes. It is also in this capacity that the assessor assists with the sale and registration of boats and other recreational vehicles on behalf of the State Parks and Recreation Department.

However, if you are referring to day-to-day activities, then the most important responsibilities of the county assessor are those of an administrator, establishing and executing policies, budget development and management,

development and maintenance of healthy employee relations. It is also the assessor's responsibility to promote an open and trusting relationship with the public, local government and members of the business community. When conflict arises, it is the responsibility of the assessor to use the law, facts present-

ed by all parties and common sense to mediate and resolve the matter. Without experienced administrative leadership, operational responsibilities suffer and county liability increases.

2. Happy to share, but a statement of qualifications is only helpful if there is an understanding of what skill sets the job requires. In the course of campaigning, I realized there is a perception that the terms appraiser and assessor are synonymous when in fact there are not. An appraiser collects and records data to help comply with one of the areas for which the assessor has overall administrative and operational authority and responsibility. Regarding the comprehensive skill set required, the two jobs are so unrelated that Idaho State statute exempts County Assessors from certification as appraisers.

Now to answer your question. The assessor is the administrative head of a county department. I have decades of management and administrative experience at the county government level dealing with budgets, personnel matters and contract and labor relation negotiations. I have a bachelor degree in vocational training and development which allows me to step into an organization, identify and analyze employee tasks to ensure they comply with law and agency policy, and if not develop the needed changes and training to bring them into compliance. I have real world experience managing a budget of \$23 million and leading a staff of over

260. As an experienced manager, I will ensure the employees of the office are doing things right, as an experienced leader, answerable to the communities of Bonner County, I will ensure they are doing the right thing.

3. I view the office of assessor as more of an administrator's job than a partisan political position, one who is obligated to ensure equitable service to everyone. Being aware that, due to a combination of unfortunate circumstances and challenges not uncommon to an agency of its size, the office was having problems, and I thought the kind of support I have to offer could be of benefit. In discussing the prospect with friends and acquaintances, I became aware of the perception that the assessor's office did not have much regard for the concerns and issues of property owners. Real estate and other business professionals expressed similar feelings. Whatever the reason, it was clear there was a disconnect between the office and the public they serve. So I, as you say, got into the race.

4. There is a division within the office and a great deal of apprehension about the future. As assessor one of my priorities will be to bring a sense of unity of purpose to office personnel.

Policies and procedures need to be revised or established that standardize effective operations based on statute and the real world collective experiences of current employees. (Prelude to a five-year business plan.)

A culture of public service needs to be promoted in the office, and we need to change the public's perception by actively engaging the general public, business community and taxing district authorities, with informative and constructive dialogue. This can be done through personal contact, forums, media and a much-improved website enhancing the knowledge and image of the assessor office.

5. Voters will hear a lot about the experience of assessor candidates in this race: 27 years as an appraiser, 40 years experience as a developer in the Los Angeles area and Bonner County. Experience is a good thing to have, but it's great when it is relative to the job at hand. In the case of county assessor, that means leadership experience. I had my first experience at 15 when my dad would leave me to supervise construction workers doing site prep. At 18 I was leading a squad of combat Marines in the mountain jungles of Vietnam and more than 20 years of the 30-year career in law enforcement were in leadership positions. Leaders translate intention into reality while focusing on vision, mission, and values. The office of assessor is too important to be used for on-the-job leadership training; I have the experience and education to bring leadership to the assessor's office on day one.

Please vote Dennis Engelhardt for Bonner County Assessor on May 15.