

READER

ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, BLUSTER AND SOME NEWS

OCTOBER 21, 2021 | **Free!** | VOL. 18 ISSUE 42

**ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE WITH
SANDPOINT CITY COUNCIL AND
DOVER CITY COUNCIL AND
MAYORAL CANDIDATES**

**LOCAL PAIR COMPLETES
THRU-HIKE TO RAISE MONEY FOR
MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS**

THE CULT OF A THOUSAND CUTS





CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

2021 ELECTION Sandpoint and Dover city races

Ahead of the Tuesday, Nov. 2 election, the Reader presents a limited series of election guides featuring questions and answers with candidates for a range of local offices. This week focuses on candidates for three open seats on the Sandpoint City Council, as well as two open seats on the Dover City Council and two candidates for mayor. To read more about the candidates for a contested seat on the Lake Pend Oreille School District Board of Trustees go to sandpointreader.com. For more information on candidates running unopposed, visit Election Central on sandpointonline.com (sandpointonline.com/news/elections.shtml). For all other election-related information, visit Bonner County Elections at bonnercountyid.gov. The Reader hosted a candidates' forum Oct. 19 at the Sandpoint branch of the East Bonner County Library, video of which is available at krfy.org.

Sandpoint City Council race

Questions:

- 1. Why are you running for Sandpoint City Council?
- 2. What would be your top three priorities if elected?
- 3. Affordability is consistently ranked as among the most critical issues facing Sandpoint residents. What do you plan to do as a council member to address this issue?
- 4. The city has been put in the position over the past year or more to implement various COVID-19 protocols — what's your position on the role that city government should play in mitigating the pandemic?

Joel Aispuro (incumbent)



Age: 34
Birthplace and residence: San Diego, Calif.; Sandpoint
Years in Bonner County: 26
Government service/relevant experience: currently Sandpoint City Council member, family restaurant, father, husband
Profession: family business
Education: high school, family business, City Council
Family: wife, three daughters and one son

- 1. I am seeking re-election because of the love of my family, my family business and this community. Also, I would love to continue to serve the community.
- 2. a. Updating the Comprehensive Plan;
b. Housing (seeking to do what is best for the citizens of Sandpoint while protecting property rights);
c. Improving government services and infrastructure.
- 3. Affordability is an issue not unique to Sandpoint. This is a nationwide issue. Why is this a nationwide issue? Because of inflation. Over time, inflation increases the price of goods and services, which then decreases the number of goods and services you can buy with the dollar. What you can buy today for a dollar will cost more in the future. For most middle-class businesses and citizens, the wages cannot keep up with the rate of inflation. The federal government creates this problem then puts it on the backs of the middle class and local government to fix it?
- 4. The city did a good job

encouraging the community to do what is best for themselves and their families. The city encouraged and will continue to encourage personal responsibility.

Wayne Benner



Age: 73
Birthplace and residence: Bellingham, Wash.; Sandpoint
Years in Bonner County: November 1974-December 2020; February 2021 to present
Government service: Bonner County commissioner, six years; city administrator, nine years;

- planning commissioner; fire district commissioner; water/sewer manager
Profession: retired
Education: BSME plus numerous hours of classes and workshops
Family: three children raised in Bonner County
- 1. To provide my education background and experience in the public and private sector to assist Sandpoint with their evolution.
 - 2. Comprehensive Plan and guidelines, housing affordable and workforce infrastructure. Pushing the planned unit development would help benefit the housing issue, such as having a tiny home development. Infrastructure is every community's issue — old infrastructure. I will support all upgrades.
 - 3. I plan to work positively with all agencies, groups, etc., to find a solution that best fits Sandpoint. I would support all city rules and regulations to address the issues of housing.
 - 4. The city should lead at all times under all circumstances. Failure to lead shows lack of

concern or commitment. For us seniors, we have lived through various pandemics and shot mandates. We are here because of mandates. We go to the dentist and expect them to wear a mask. We go to the doctor and expect them to wear a mask. I so respect my family, friends and neighbors that protecting myself and them is a privilege. I've been vaccinated, been tested, wear a mask and am very proud to be a part of the majority trying to mitigate the pandemic.

Arthur Bistline



(Arthur Bistline)

Age: 52

Birthplace and residence:

Sandpoint

Years in Bonner County: 1969 to 1976, 2012 to present

Government service/relevant experience: Dover city attorney for 12 years, maybe more. Have had many dealings with city council and staff over the years

Profession: attorney

Education: University of Idaho business finance, summa cum laude, 1992; U of I Law, 1995, cum laude

Family: Amy Bistline (formerly Amy Curtis, daughter of Dick Curtis and Dana Smith)

1. Because I believe it is everyone's duty to contribute and I think I have something to contribute and I love this town.

2. a. Making sure my priorities coincide with the citizens;

b. Workforce housing and making sure that city officials don't unreasonably interfere with business growth;

c. Working with the railroads and Idaho Department of Transportation to minimize their impact on our lifestyles.

3. I do not believe in interfering with the housing market forces. I would consider some lower-income housing, but where to put it in Sandpoint would be difficult. It would have to be on city-owned property, as no one is going to sell below market, which would make it prohibitively expensive to do such a project.

4. The city, like any other private person or entity, can do whatever it wants on city property. I don't think the city should be telling private business what to do, but I do think the city should make it clear that violating a private business's entry protocols will get you charged with trespassing.

John Darling (incumbent)



Age: 47

Birthplace and residence: Sandpoint

Years in Bonner County: 44

Government service: Sandpoint City Council, three years and nine months; city of Ponderay, 7 years

Profession: local business owner

Education: Sandpoint High School, U.S. Navy veteran

Family: married with 3 children

1. I am running to ensure the direction of Sandpoint's future development has a traditional influence, that the city is fiscally responsible and our city government is transparent to its residents.

2. Seeing out the development of our Master Parks Plan and Multimodal Streets plan. Address rapid growth in the city of Sandpoint.

3. Consider all options brought to the city through private development and vote for the best option.

4. The city should continue to play an educational role in COVID-19 protocols.

Justin Dick



Age: 42

Birthplace and residence: Milwaukee, Wisc.; Sandpoint

Years in Bonner County: almost 16

Government service: president, Bonner General Health Foundation; Visit Sandpoint Tourism Council (10 years); former board of directors, Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce; Sandpoint Rotary Club

Profession: owner, Trinity at City Beach; co-owner, Jalapenos Mexican Restaurant; opening a new concept at the Truby's Building in January 2022

Education: B.S. psychology, University of Colorado Denver

Family: Shaunavee Dick, wife of 15 years; Jace Dick, son, 13 years old, student at Sandpoint Middle School; Evelyn Dick, daughter, 9 years old, student at Washington Elementary; both born at Bonner General Health

1. My family has been in this community since 2006 and have owned small businesses here since 2009. We left Denver to start our family in an area rich with natural beauty, resources, a diverse community and historical community pride. I was involved in the Comprehensive Plan in 2008-'09 and the Parks and Rec. Master Plan. The growth of Sandpoint and the surrounding area has been astonishing prior to the COVID shutdown and has increased dramatically thereafter. We are at a pivotal time in our community to welcome newcomers and help them matriculate to our small-town pace of life while being stewards of our land and resources. Our residents and business community need representation that understands the challenges facing this amazing place we call home. There's no better time to tackle these challenges and participate in shaping this community for the next 10-20 years. Every challenge we face is an opportunity.

2. a. Update the Comprehensive Plan through engagement of the community to set direction and course of our future and work toward a community that is inclusive of all walks of life, abilities, diversity, socio-economic status, industry, non-profit, education, community health care, tourism and new/old residents alike;

b. Community affordability — we are facing a supply and demand problem as we were not prepared for the massive influx of new residents and development we have

incurred the past 20+ months.

c. Responsible growth — growth is inevitable yet we can grow while still preserving our small-town pace of life, inclusivity, natural beauty and resources.

3. Affordability was one of the community's top responses in creation of the 2008-2009 Comprehensive Plan, yet over a decade later, we face a worsening affordability issue. The low hanging fruit is with current zoning, affordable land use requirements, property tax exemptions, ADU planning, ordinance revisions, public-private partnerships, deed restrictions, etc. The city currently has 300 multi-family and 300 single-family developments slated over the course of the next 12-24 months. This is not an issue that moves quickly considering the due diligence that must be done for each development. I will be one of six votes that help steer our community to handle its current growth with the long-term vision of how our community is shaped to handle affordability and growth 10-20 years down the road.

4. I believe the responsibility lies within each of our community members to do what makes them feel safe. Compassion for everyone, as human beings, regardless of how they choose to deal with COVID and COVID mitigation, will bring this community together and ultimately bring us back to a normalcy we once enjoyed.

Frytz Mor



Age:

Birthplace and residence:

Years in Bonner County:

Government service:

Profession:

Education:

Family:

DID NOT PARTICIPATE

Luke Omodt



Age: 44

Birthplace and residence: Missoula, Mont.; residence Sandpoint

Years in Bonner County: 42, minus college and military

Government service/relevant experience: 23 years of military service, public educator for 12 years

Profession: government teacher at Bonners Ferry High School, soldier

Education: B.A. secondary education social with a minor in government

Family: wife and two great kids; parents Fred and Patty Omodt, of Shingle Mill Blueberry Farm

1. I am running for Sandpoint City Council because I love this town. Public service is a responsibility and privilege of being American. I have served our country and state in uniform since Bill Clinton was our president, four deployments and 23 years later it is time to hang up my boots and focus on our town. The failure of the current council and mayor to purchase the former-University of Idaho property was the greatest missed opportunity of my lifetime. Many people are more than willing to complain about our politics, very few are willing to step forward to work toward solutions.

2. a. Housing — Affordable housing doesn't start at \$400,000. Development and immigration to our town are not something that we can avoid or hide from; we must utilize a mix of policy, zoning and incentives to address this crisis;

b. Infrastructure — Our town has been loved hard. We have streets, sidewalks and parks that need attention, this requires resources that have to come from somewhere;

< see ELECTION, Page 16 >

**ELECTION DAY
is Nov. 2, 2021**

**Polls are open
8 a.m.-8 p.m.**

< **ELECTION, con't from Page 15** >

c. Economics — We need an economy where our local students’ future is not only in moving away, families can build a future here and respect the tax burden that we are asking of our residents on a fixed income.

3. The Sandpoint City Council should create the greater Sandpoint Area Housing Authority. The city should partner with Kootenai, Dover, Ponderay and Bonner County in developing housing solutions. Current developments are building homes at prices that our workforce cannot afford. I would have changed the language on the LOT, “to purchase property for open space, parks and recreation, and potential workforce housing.” Income-based local housing like Culver’s Crossing policy, zoning and incentives all need to be on the table to address this crisis. There is no silver bullet. Sandpoint and our neighbors don’t need aspirational solutions, we need pragmatic action.

4. The city of Sandpoint should follow the science and the law. The primary role of city government is to provide services to the residents and businesses within their incorporated area. I wholeheartedly support medical freedom. Having served in countries where residents did not have any sort of autonomy has given me great respect for both the liberty and responsibility that accompanies being an American citizen. The city should work closely with the Panhandle Health District, the Bonner County commissioners, and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare in charting our path forward.

Jason Welker



Age: 42
Birthplace and residence: born in Kirkland, Wash., resides in south Sandpoint

Years in Bonner County: I lived in Bonner County part-time from 2004 (when my wife and I purchased our first home here) through 2017, and full-time since 2017

Government service: two years on the Sandpoint Planning and Zoning Commission, serving as chairman since October 2020

Profession: executive director of Pend Oreille Pedalers, Sandpoint’s non-profit trails organization and cycling club; business administrator of Schweitzer Alpine Racing School; and economics textbook author and educational content creator. Formerly an international economics teacher from 2004-2017

Education: bachelor’s degree in economics from Seattle University and a master’s in teaching from Whitworth University (Spokane)

Family: wife, Elizabeth Wargo, who is a U of I educational leadership professor and lifelong Idaho resident, and daughter, Libby, 9, who is in the third grade at Washington Elementary School

1. I decided to run for City Council after the current council approved the University Place subdivision on the former-U of I property, a development that the P&Z Commission, which I am on, voted 7-0 to recommend rejection of. In my opinion, the development failed to live up to the public’s vision for the property, our Comprehensive Plan and several specific areas of City Code. In the two years that I have served on P&Z, I have grown increasingly concerned with the pattern of development in Sandpoint, which I believe puts developers’ desires to capitalize on a hot housing market and the interests of out-of-state buyers above people who live and work in Sandpoint.

2. a. Re-engage the public in the process of updating our 2009 Comprehensive Plan to assure that our city’s guiding document reflects the visions and values of Sandpoint’s residents today for the path that growth and development should take over the next 10 years;

b. Prioritize the implementation of the city’s Multimodal Transportation Plan, with a focus on making Sandpoint safer

for cyclists and pedestrians by building shared-use pathways and bike lanes while investing in our sidewalk priority network;

c. Protect our natural amenities and assure clean water for drinking and recreation by conserving Sandpoint’s 5,000 acres in the Little Sand Creek drinking watershed and immediately beginning the process of updating our 70-year-old sewage treatment plant.

3. The city’s 2019 Housing Assessment report was never formally presented to nor adopted

by the council, despite it including numerous suggestions for ameliorating the housing crisis, which has only intensified in the two years since. Council must act immediately and adopt some of its suggestions as policy; these include looking closely at city ordinances that govern development in multi-family neighborhoods, the adoption of incentives for developers who are willing to build housing for our local workforce and the acquisition of property to dedicate to workforce housing, which can be provided through

partnerships with private developers and large area employers.

4. Promoting public health is beyond the purview of city government. Our regional health district is responsible for communicating public health advice and issuing mandates when deemed necessary (as the PHD briefly did in 2020 with a mask mandate). City government should only make rules that apply to city employees, while measures to protect workers at other local businesses should be left to those business owners.