



ELECTION 2006 ENDORSEMENTS - May 4, 2006

Harrington best of Metro hopefuls

As the Forest Grove Planning Commission waded its way through the hydraulics of a controversial creekside high-density housing proposal Monday night, a woman the sixth row sat silently in rapt attention. She wasn't a developer. Or a neighbor. Or a consultant. She was a candidate for the Metro Council.

When, at a previous hearing on the same project, it was pointed out that Kathryn Harrington was unlikely to pick up any votes (particularly given that she didn't promote her candidacy), the former Intel software engineer replied. "That's not why I'm here. I'm here because I need to understand this issue."

And that's why Harrington is the best choice for Metro Council in District 4, the Washington County seat being vacated by Susan McLain.

You can tell a lot about how a person will govern by how they campaign. Harrington, who lives in Beaverton, has been a near constant figure in this end of the county this spring. She's knocked on doors, attended public meetings, showed up for debates. Along the way, she's demonstrated a firm grasp of the challenges facing the region and a commitment to balance the needs of Washington County with the goals of the metropolitan area. Most important, she's shown a desire to listen with intent to understand, rather than score points with voters.

Harrington's rivals have their own attributes.

Tom Cox, who's run for past posts, including governor, as a Libertarian, is one of those rare government critics who shows up with well-researched analysis of the programs he doesn't like and, in many cases, alternatives that could actually work. There's no doubt that Cox has the brains and work ethic needed for the job. Our concern is that his efforts to dramatically pare down Metro's role go too far and would leave him isolated and ineffective on the seven-member panel.

Kathy Christy brought the best civic resume to the race. The former County Commissioner knows the issues and players in the region, but the veteran politician hasn't matched the energy and expertise Harrington has shown in her first bid for office. During Christy's endorsement interview with us she confused two sources of funding Metro gets from its solid waste program (and was politely corrected by Cox and Harrington) and has spent more time complaining about traffic congestion than proposing solutions that make sense for Metro.

Al Young, a former state lawmaker, rightly says that the next Metro councilor must do a better job of working with state and local leaders. But he's not matched Harrington's energy or earnestness.