

Lompico directors' jobs on the line

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LOMPICO — Voters will go to the polls Tuesday to decide the fate of five water board directors in a recall election in which candidates' personalities, financial status and comments about their mothers are as much issues as water management.

Water board directors Shannar Abraham, Jerry Endres, Don Keahey, Ross Foulk and Evelyn Anderson will be defending themselves against recall proponents' claims that they "showed a lack of respect for Lompico residents" and that they "did not adequately represent the interests of the people of Lompico."

Abraham is being challenged by John Grunow, Endres by Hal Rogers, Foulk by Mickey Schultz and Paula Gallant, Keahey by Stacy Wright and Paul Hurford and Anderson by Steven Rooks and Ken Miller.

Grunow, Rogers, Schultz, Miller and Wright are part of a slate they call "The Wise Council."

This is the first election for seats on the Lompico water board in "several years," according to County Clerk Richard Bedal.

The current board is made up of directors who were either appointed because of a lack of candidates, or who ran unopposed in the last primary.

Terms of two of the directors would have been up in November.

The water board oversees the 500-hookup water district which operates on a \$200,000 annual budget. It is also responsible for devising a wastewater management plan to help clean up Lompico Canyon.

Most of the directors say the conflict arises over a wastewater management plan the board wants to adopt.

Their opponents either take issue with the plan adopted, say they can do it better for less, or charge that directors have not kept a rein on costs as well as they should have.

But representatives of both sides say the recall revolves around personal style.

"That's about all this is — it's a personality conflict," says Foulk.

The Sentinel was able to contact 11 of the 13 candidates running in the recall. Here are their views:

JERRY ENDRES — Endres, 44, has lived in Lompico 17 years. "We were the first agency in the San Lorenzo Valley to come up with a wastewater plan in concert with our own people," he says, pointing to a plan designed jointly by the water district and a citizens' committee.

He counters criticism that the board has not communicated well with the public: "We've sent out more information, held more public hearings than any other agency in the county."

Recall advocates say the board wants to make some homeowners be part of cluster systems, in which two or more houses share a community leach field. Cost is estimated at \$10,000 to \$20,000 a home, "but we

can get 97½ percent funding for it," Endres says.

He concluded, "I don't think you should recall anybody unless there's been some kind of mismanagement, which there hasn't. Just because there's a difference of opinion isn't a good reason for a recall."

HAL ROGERS — Rogers' candidacy has caused some controversy because he doesn't live in Lompico, although he has been registered to vote there since 1984.

This is legal because the county elections code requires only that a candidate be registered at the place they intend to live or consider their home, according to County Clerk Bedal.

Rogers says he cannot live in Lompico because a house he is building has not yet received a final inspection by the county.

Rogers, 30, who has owned property in Lompico since 1975, says he spends many of his waking hours in Lompico.

His phone number is also in Capitola. Rogers says he has been a member of the Lave Boulevard-Visitar Road Association for a number of years.

Rogers says he agrees with the septic tank clean-up plan adopted by the Lompico water board, except that he thinks the inspections can be done at no cost to the homeowner. (The district's plan calls for an \$8 a month fee.)

"Our three-member staff is underworked," says Rogers. "They could do septic tank inspections in addition to meter readings over a three-year period."

He also opposes the use of cluster systems. He is skeptical of claims that government money will pay for it and favors the use of composting toilets, sand filters and other so-called "innovative and alternative" solutions to Lompico's problems.

Although the water board's plans also includes allowances for composting toilets, this would never have happened if it weren't for the recall, says Rogers. "They never would have listened to us otherwise," he says. "You can't go to a board meeting without them telling members of the public to be still."

ROSS FOULK — Incumbent Foulk, 37, has lived in Lompico since 1978. He says he decided to serve on the water board last year to help design a plan to clean up septic pollution in Lompico Creek.

Foulk maintains that the recall proponents are motivated by personal grievances against the board. Wright, he says, is still angry about a dispute involving a high water bill which Wright unsuccessfully protested last year.

He called Schultz a "hippie" and says the Wise Council slate "doesn't have the wherewithal or the interest to run the water district."

"There's no way those clowns could run this water district," he says.

Foulk says he believes the water district had adopted the most workable plan for wastewater management in the San Lorenzo Valley and says he hopes to be around to help implement it.

PAULA GALLANT — Gallant, 36, who has lived in Lompico seven years, says she chose to become involved in the recall because didn't want to see Schultz elected.

"I think we need people on the board who have realistic ideas," Gallant says.

Schultz has made public statements such as "water comes from

God, so why do we have to pay for it?," according to Gallant.

She says the board opponents have criticized the board, but have not shown how they're going to make it any better.

Gallant chose to run as a friend-of-the-candidate challenger for Foulk because she believes he stands the most chance of being recalled.

She also favors the local control that Lompico has over its wastewater problems.

The Wise Council "feels they can implement the wastewater project for nothing, and it's just not true," she says.

MICKEY SCHULTZ — Schultz declined to be interviewed by The Sentinel.

SHANNAR ABRAHAMS — A remark incumbent Abrahams made at a water board meeting months ago continues to haunt the 46-year-old president of the Lompico Water board.

During one of the more heated meetings on the costs of a proposed wastewater plan, Abrahams said he tried to show his empathy for residents by saying he understands the problems of the poor because his mother lived on fixed income and she would have lost her house if he didn't support her.

Recall proponents maintain Abrahams said that if you couldn't afford to live in your homes under the new wastewater plan, then move.

"People who know me know I would never make a statement like that," says Abrahams, who has lived in Lompico for nine years.

He said the recall charges are so vague they are hard respond to. "At meetings, you have to be firm; that makes me arrogant," said Abrahams.

He said the board has been discussing a septic tank plan for years and has always notified the public of meetings. "Then, people got real excited and all of the sudden, it was something they never heard of," said Abrahams.

"This is a typical slur campaign. They make accusations that are hard to respond to, and then if you do respond, you're guilty because you're trying to defend yourself," said Abrahams.

He said the Wise Council candidates claim they can slice the budget but they didn't even show up during the district's budget hearing meetings.

JOHN GRUNOW — The Sentinel was not able to contact Grunow despite repeated calls to his home. His campaign literature takes the water district to task for not taking care of exposed water pipes which he said can be seen throughout the district. He also criticizes the district for acquiring a \$140,000 debt for a wastewater plan which will not be used. (When the state turned down

REFERENCE

the San Lorenzo Valley Water District's sewer project, it left Lompico holding the bag on money directors had spent on engineering for Lompico's project.)

"The money spent on engineering would have paid for between 40 and 100 new septic tanks and leach fields," states Grunow's literature. "How many more of the present board's projects can we afford?"

EVELYN ANDERSON — Incumbent Anderson said the recall centers on some residents' opposition to the septic tank clean-up plan, "but the recall candidates haven't come up with any plans of their own," she says. "They also say they can cut the district's budget in half but they haven't said how."

Anderson says some people in the community have personality conflicts with Abrahams, whom she characterized as a "dynamic and aggressive" leader who has "done a good job, especially in getting local control of the wastewater program."

She says the district does not have a choice whether it does something about water pollution — that state has ordered it to — and that most people in the canyon agree with the fact that something needs to be done.

Recall advocates say the board

doesn't inform the community when it wants to do something. "But we do tell them. They just don't listen," Anderson says.

She says the only way the Wise Council could even begin to cut the district budget in half is to fire the water district manager.

KEN MILLER — Miller, 32, has lived in Lompico for three years. He says that when it comes to a septic tank program, the current board has ignored the wishes of the people.

He also says Lompico water rates are the highest in the county and that the district budget could be cut in half by making the three-member staff of the district more efficient. "As it stands, the employees do very little and mostly sit around," Miller says.

He believes septic tank inspections could be done at no cost to the homeowner by making district employees work harder. He also says he has heard that the water district has already been turned down for grant funding for cluster systems.

When told that water board directors maintain to the contrary — that there is grant money available — Miller says, "That's part of the problem. On the one hand they'll give us one story and then they'll change it, depending on who they're talking to."

Miller pledged to be more responsive to the community if elected.

STEVEN ROOKS — The Sentinel was unable to contact Rooks.

DON KEAHEY — Incumbent Keahey, 58, has lived in Lompico for 20 years.

He thinks the board has put together a good wastewater project and that "it would be in the community's best interest not to change horses in the middle of a stream."

As for cluster systems, he says nobody, including the experts, know exactly how many systems will be needed, and that it will probably be only a handful of homes which need such drastic measures. The others will be able to fix their septic systems using some other, more simple method.

He says the board has always tried to do what residents want.

STACY WRIGHT — Wright, 35, has lived in Lompico for two years.

He maintains that water district mismanagement, and not septic management, is the real issue behind the recall. "We're upset because we're not being listened to," Wright says.

The fact that the board doesn't represent the people is shown by the fact that more than 200 voters signed petitions calling for a recall, Wright says.

Wright claims to be able to operate the water district on half of its annual \$200,000 budget and says that water rates have skyrocketed since the current board has been in office.

"They don't tell us what they're doing or how they're spending our money," says Wright. "There's plenty of space in our monthly bill to say what they're doing."

He also accuses the water board of meeting at the "purposely inconvenient" hour of 6 p.m. Most residents aren't home from work till 6:30 p.m., Wright says.

Says Wright, "They brag about how they're responsible for all this nice clean water we're getting, but the new system went in before they were on the board."

Wright says employees' salaries will be re-evaluated if the Wise Council is elected. "The board is spending too much on wages and taxes," he says.

Wright also believes the district's reserve fund is too high.

PAUL HURFORD — Hurford, 40, who has lived in Lompico for 10 years, says he is running as an alternative candidate to Wright. He and Wright have had an "ongoing battle" in letters to the editor of a local weekly newspaper, and when Wright filed to run against Keahey, "It was put up or shut up time."

"The current water board has done a credible job of keeping Lompico separate from other agencies,"

Hurford says.

He says he fears that if water board directors are recalled, their replacements will do such an inept job that the district will be taken over by the county or the San Lorenzo Valley water board. "I have a feeling developers are waiting in the wings for the results of this election," Hurford says.

Hurford points out that SLV wanted to put sewers in Zayante, which is just a stone's throw from Lompico.

"The septic systems in Lompico have got to be fixed," he adds. He favors the plan adopted by the water board.