

League of Women Voters of Wyoming July 2018
Albany County Commissioner

There are three commissioners who serve four-year staggered terms with no term limits. Two seats are up for election this year; those elected will join Commissioner Terri Jones (R), who has two years left on her term. Commissioners receive a salary of \$30,000 and some benefits but no office. Candidates Andrew Boheler (R) and David Thomason (D) did not respond.

What experience, qualifications and interests do you have that would encourage voters to select you for this office?

Tim Chesnut (D): I have been a commissioner for many years now and would like to continue to my efforts to enact responsible regulations to protect the Casper aquifer and plan responsibly for the growth of Laramie and Albany County. I would also like to continue efforts to purchase the Pilot Hill land deal to create recreational and land conservation legacy for the future generations of Albany County residents. There are many wind energy developments proposed for the area and I would like to continue to be a leader in establishing renewable energy and establish transmission lines to get our energy to useable consumers.

Pete Gosar (D): I have lived in Albany County for two decades and have a passion for its people and places. I believe Albany County is poised to lead in Wyoming, but only if the county commission becomes more innovative, transparent and accountable. As a business owner, the director of a local non-profit and as a former Chairman of the Wyoming Board of Education, I have learned about leadership and the importance of community involvement. I will reach out to citizens throughout Albany County to find innovative solutions, I will work to make commission business more transparent and accessible, and I will listen.

Klaus Halbsgut (D): My dad and father-in-law came here looking for a better life, more opportunities. I'm following in their footsteps. We have managed or owned businesses in the county; I've been a Laramie businessman for 27 years through good and bad times. I will bring those experiences to the commission for the benefit of ALL of Albany County, giving back to the community that has supported my family. I'm a devoted family man who enjoys downhill skiing, music, motorcycles, scuba diving, fitness, history, politics, Drag racing & outdoor recreation. I strongly support our agricultural and ranching communities in Albany County.

Maura Hanning (D): I served 12 years in state government where I gained experience successfully collaborating with municipalities, agriculture, industry, federal agencies, tribes, lawmakers, and the public to solve wide-ranging problems including water quality protection and water conservation. Examples of my accomplishments include: establishing "*Guidelines for Above Ground Use of Reclaimed Domestic Wastewater*" during drought in New Mexico; and, creating and gaining enactment of the *NM Voluntary Remediation Act (1997)* which provides for cleanup of abandoned properties. I currently sit as Commissioner, Planning Commission/Board of Adjustment for the City of Laramie, and Treasurer, Laramie Montessori School. For more information, see www.ElectMauraHanning.com

Thad Hoff (R): I have owned and operated Wyoming State Safe & Lock for 15 years in this community and prior to that I earned an A.A. at Casper College then later a bachelor's degree in criminal justice at UW. As a locksmith, my work requires a high degree of problem solving and the keystone of its operation is honesty and integrity. During my time in Albany County, I have volunteered hundreds of hours on the Albany County Search and Rescue team. I enjoy getting outdoors to explore areas I've yet to see with my family, our horses, and shooting when time allows.

Jerry M. Kennedy (R): My Father, W. H. Kennedy, homesteaded Dodge Creek Ranch 100 years ago. I was born and raised in rural Albany County and have lived there all my life. Wife, Evelyn, and I have been married for 54 years. We raised two sons who attended rural school on the ranch. I am a member of Albany County Stockgrowers, NRA, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Masonic Lodge. I was BLM Fire Guard 47 years, 27 years on Albany County Weed and Pest.

Tony Mendoza (D): I come from a long line of community organizers, community activists and volunteers, my parents. I have a desire to serve and bring a new voice to the table.

Heber Richardson (R): As an incumbent, I have four years of experience in all aspects of the job as a county commissioner. When I ran four years ago, I hoped that my life and business experience would translate to vision and leadership skills that the job requires. I've found that I am well prepared. I'm good at listening and balancing competing needs. I love to serve the people around me. I know the partners we work with and I try selflessly to make our community a great place to live and work.

Clinton "Swiz" Swierczek (D): Being a resident in Albany County since 1978, a graduate of the University of Wyoming with a Bachelor of Science degree, raising a family, and a professional physical education teacher with Albany County School District One for thirty-eight years, has given me the experience and qualifications in working with the public and community. After retiring from the school district this June, it is my desire to continue serving the residents of Albany County as a County Commissioner ensuring strong communication skills and collaboration efforts are met between the city and county government, while complying to the Wyoming State Statutes.

How do you interpret the responsibility of the county commission with regard to drinking water quality for all city and county users?

Tim Chesnut (D): Protecting the Casper aquifer is one of the most important roles I see as a county commissioner. Responsible development over the aquifer through the aquifer protection plan will be a paramount measure moving forward in the role of both county and city government. As a commissioner I will move to expand the current aquifer protection zone to a more logical and science based boundary, with minimal infringement on private property rights. Test wells and more rigorous septic system and well head inspections are critical to determine possible contaminants.

Pete Gosar (D): Every public official has a duty to protect citizens and the resources that they depend upon. There are few resources more important than high quality drinking water and we must not repeat the failures of Flint, Michigan. I believe we have a golden opportunity through the Pilot Hill Project to create a long-lasting solution for everyone depending upon the Casper Aquifer, and we must not waste that opportunity. The commitment to clean water is an investment in the future of Albany County and we must ensure high quality drinking water to every county resident. Working together, we will find solutions.

Klaus Halbsgut (D): This is an easy question, for me personally this is quality of life issue. Albany county needs to have clean water for all its residents. Not only should we protect our aquifer, we should protect our rivers. Healthy economic development depends upon clean water. The commission, working with the city, has a responsibility to protect and improve water quality. Protecting the aquifer is one of the main reasons I support the Pilot Hill acquisition. I will do whatever I can to protect and improve water quality wherever possible.

Maura Hanning (D): Commissioners may only impose planning and zoning requirements “to promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the county...” in unincorporated areas of the County (W.S. 18-5-201). You might therefore think Commissioners have limited influence on City drinking water, but think again: 97% of the Casper Aquifer, the source for half of Laramie’s water, is outside City-limits. If elected, I will use my background in water resource protection to make sound planning and zoning decisions that protect drinking water quality countywide and I will collaborate with the City and the EAC to implement the Casper Aquifer Protection Plan.

Thad Hoff (R): I see the commissioner's role as one of the first lines of defense in preserving access to clean water and at the same time not hinder economic development; both in regard to well access and residential ability to source water when well access yields non consumable water. Stewardship of the land and the water system through monitoring and hazard mitigation should provide for future access indefinitely. I would like to develop a stronger relationship with the city and town of Rock River in maintaining clean, accessible water for the future. Commissioners need also consider watering livestock and residence livelihoods when discussing water.

Jerry M. Kennedy (R): I previously served 12 years as Albany County Commissioner. We worked hard to make sure Albany County had regulations in place for well heads as well as regulations on septic systems and encouraged well drillers and septic installers to be qualified. It is important that County Commissioners do not encourage economic developments and subdivisions that may pollute the aquifers.

Tony Mendoza (D): Protection of the aquifer is one of the most moral responsibilities of the County Commission. This is one of the most important management task entrusted to the County Commission.

Heber Richardson (R): Tough question. The water in the ground belongs to the state. It isn’t ours until we pump it to the surface. The county has the prime responsibility after the state to protect the water we all use because the aquifer recharge area is largely outside the city. We can

only do it through rules for land development. It is difficult to balance private property rights and the public's need for clean water. We also can and will complete the Pilot Hill land purchase to preserve the land for conservation and recreation.

Clinton "Swiz" Swierczek (D): As a county resident, it's the responsibility of a county commissioner to protect all residents ensuring good quality drinking water. The Casper Aquifer supplies a large portion of water to our Albany County residents. It's important a county commissioner stay apprised with the Casper Aquifer Protection Plan, and any accompanying ordinances, making sure everyone is compliant in protecting our water supply ensuring our community has healthy safe drinking water. A county commissioner needs to take the responsibility to inform the public of the importance of protecting and maintaining our largest water supply.

Currently, county commission meetings are held on a weekday morning and agendas are not posted until shortly before. How would you make the county commission meetings more accountable and accessible to the public?

Tim Chesnut (D): The commissioner agenda goes through a final review and examination by all departments on the Thursday before the following Tuesday meeting. The agenda is then published on that Friday evening to give everyone ample opportunity to review the document. Commissioner meetings have been scheduled in the morning as not to conflict with city council meeting held that same day. In my time on the commission there has never been any public input that the public has not been able to attend at that time, and the commission bends over backward to let all citizens be heard with no time limits.

Pete Gosar (D): To ensure public participation and access, county commission meetings must be held in the evening and agendas must be made available a week in advance. Commission meetings should be streamed in real-time and public comments submitted through social media should be entered into the record and addressed. As a commissioner, I would welcome community participation and would look forward to working on creative solutions to bring about more citizen involvement. The present county commission's lack of transparency and archaic processes lock out many citizens of Albany County. The current situation is unacceptable and I will work for innovative change.

Klaus Halbsgut (D): Tuesday's are set by the state legislature. Time of day is up to the county. All the commissioners & those hoping to be, have their e-mail addresses & phone numbers listed as public information. If you have a question, I hope all you have to do is ask any commissioner and/or candidate. I'm not sure why county site is slow to post agendas, to promote openness we should get that info out earlier. I personally, if elected would like to have listening sessions every few months in different county locations to understand the needs of the county residents.

Maura Hanning (D): I managed state programs with public notice obligations and I believe transparency and robust citizen involvement strengthen the outcomes in government decision-making. Changes to the meeting schedule are allowed (W.S. 18-3-502) and should be considered in consultation with County staff and the public to improve public involvement. Any changes must ensure efficiency for business coming before the County and City. 2018 agenda data reflect

that 13 of 17 regular meeting agendas were posted the Friday preceding the Tuesday meeting (similar to Laramie's schedule), so some fine tuning is needed to ensure consistent and timely posting.

Thad Hoff (R): The time of meetings at this time can't be changed, but the way commissioners interact and consult with the public can. Agenda availability, as I see it, is an easy thing to change. It can be published earlier and in formats that extend to social media. Utilizing technology, such as live streaming or video immediately available to the public, would allow the county more access to the meeting and make commissioners more accountable for their votes and actions. The citizens of this county need someone who has their best, honest intentions at heart and the integrity to act on them.

Jerry M. Kennedy (R): Agendas are completed by Friday prior to the Tuesday meeting. Therefore they should be accessible to the public. I am not sure how meetings could be more accountable and accessible to the public. Each meeting is recorded and placed on the web site so the public is able to monitor meetings. The time and place of all meetings are required to be published in a local newspaper prior to the meeting.

Tony Mendoza (D): State Statute clearly states that the County Commission must meet on the first Tuesday of each but does not state a time for the meeting, therefore I would move to an evening meeting so as to assure full opportunity for citizen participation.

Heber Richardson (R): Our process is currently very open and accountable. Accessibility can be an issue for some. Our meeting days are dictated by state statute. If we change our meeting times to the evenings, we would conflict with city council meetings. We would need the city to change their meeting day to move to the evenings. Our agendas come with short notice because our staff and the public need to get items taken care of by us. Publishing the agenda earlier would require us to delay action on some important items until the following meeting. Delays are expensive for taxpayers and citizens . . .

Clinton "Swiz" Swierczek (D): Communication and collaboration is important between the public and their county commissioners. Giving respect to our citizens, it's important an agenda be prepared and sent in a timely manner, allowing those attending time to prepare their comments and questions. For those unable to attend, we should be utilizing social media by creating or maintaining a current-up-date County Commissioner Facebook webpage. This can provide a live video post for the public to view at their convenience and provide a positive atmosphere informing the public with any upcoming events.