

## County board chair opposed in District 16

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OAKLAND — Voters in the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors' District 16 will be asked to choose between a longtime incumbent and new challenger in the Tuesday, April 1, election.

Incumbent John Molinaro, who currently serves as county board chairman, is being challenged in his bid for re-election by newcomer Laura Payne. Wards 1, 2 and 3 in the Town of Oakland and Ward 1 in the Village of Cambridge are included in District 16.

The two candidates were asked to provide the Daily Union with information on their background, experiences and top issues of concern related to being a county supervisor. The following are their responses, with the incumbent listed first.

### **John Molinaro**

For the past decade, John Molinaro has served on the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors. He was elected by the board members as chairman each of the past two terms.

Having served previously on multiple committees, he has attended all committee meetings as board chairman.

“This has given me a unique opportunity to have an in-depth understanding of the challenges facing Jefferson County over the next two years,” Molinaro said. “I spent 30 years as a juvenile probation officer and since I retired, I have served on the county board.”

He spent his adult life in public service, and said he would like to continue to serve as a county board member.

“The number-one issue facing Jefferson County is providing needed services with decreasing revenue and increasing cost,” Molinaro said.

“Local government is where the services reach the citizens,” he said, noting that the county plows and maintains the highways, provides human services for the most needy and much more.

“Every year, the cost of gas, heat, squad cars and personnel goes up,” Molinaro said. “The zero levy cap and reduced revenue from interest income and sales tax has made it difficult to maintain services, and erodes' local control.”

The incumbent further noted that staffing is at minimum levels to the point that illness and time off have placed a strain on most departments.

Also, he said, normal upgrades to computer systems and maintenance of physical plant sometimes are deferred for lack of funding.

“My experience dealing with these issues make me uniquely qualified to continue to serve Jefferson County,” Molinaro said. “It should be noted that employees have done more with less, and the administration has come up with creative ways to keep Jefferson County running smoothly. I look forward to working with staff to find solutions in the future.”

### **Laura Payne**

Laura Payne said she and her husband moved to the Town of Oakland because of the community, schools and area lakes, rivers, parks and farmland.

She has been active in the School District of Cambridge and serves on the Parent-Teacher Organization.

“I now want to do more to ensure that the Town of Oakland area continues to be a great place to live,” Payne said, noting that she has nearly 20 years of experience as an environmental engineer.

“Much of my knowledge and experience can be transferred to working on the county board including working together with both businesses and governments and assisting businesses with their operational and financial goals,” Payne said.

She said she considers proper representation, the budget and environmental advocacy to be priority issues.

Payne said that if elected, she would listen to the concerns of everyone in the community.

“I will respectfully work together with people who have differing viewpoints so we can make decisions in the best interest of all district residents,” she said.

Continuing, Payne said she believes the county needs to work within its budget and consider long- and short-term needs.

“I have many years’ experience creating large budgets and finishes projects on time and on budget,” she said. “I will bring this experience to better manage the county’s budget.”

Lastly, Payne cited Jefferson County’s numerous natural resources and her background and experience in helping protect those resources which enrich people’s lives.