

## County issues debated

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### First of two parts

JEFFERSON — Area residents were invited to meet the eight candidates for four contested seats on the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors during a debate on Tuesday evening.

The event, held at the Fort Community Credit Union's Puerner Room in Jefferson, was sponsored by the chambers of commerce in Jefferson and Fort Atkinson, American Association of University Women in Jefferson, WFAW Radio and the Daily Jefferson County Union.

WFAW news director Michael Clish served as moderator.

The candidates on the ballot in the April 5 election include District 10 incumbent Lloyd Zastrow and challenger Mark Groose, District 20 incumbent Jim Mode and challenger Frankie Fuller, District 27 incumbent Glen Borland and challenger Robert Bennett, and District 30 incumbent Walt Christensen and challenger Gary Kutz.

District 10 includes Wards 1 and 3 in the Town of Concord, Wards 3 and 4 in the Town of Ixonia; District 20, Wards 1, 2 and 3 in the Town of Jefferson and Ward 4 in the Town of Oakland; District 27, Wards 3 and 4 in the City of Fort Atkinson; and District 30, Wards 4-6 in the Town of Koshkonong and Ward 1 in the Town of Sumner.

The following focuses on the responses from candidates in Districts 27 and 30. To accommodate space and ensure equal coverage, an article on the District 10 and 20 candidates will appear in Thursday's Daily Union.

Following opening statements, during which each candidate had two minutes to introduce themselves (see related article on A8), the candidates were asked five questions.



### SUPERVISORS DEBATE

SUPERVISORS DEBATE — Seven of the eight candidates running for four contested Jefferson County Board of Supervisors seats in the April 5 election took part in a debate Tuesday evening at the Fort Community Credit Union in Jefferson. The supervisor seats are for Districts 10, 20, 27 and 30. Shown here are scenes from the event for two of the seats (the other two will be covered in Thursday's Daily Union). For more photos, [click here](#). — Daily Union photos by Christine Spanger.

- Drugs certainly are a problem in the county — heroin, alcohol, etc. What are your thoughts on what the county has done, what the county should do in the future and, specifically, the TAD (treatment alternatives and diversions) programs — alcohol and drug treatment courts?

“I was on the Law Enforcement Committee for a few years and I was sufficiently pleased and pleasantly impressed with the work that they do,” Borland said. “I know that, as long as I’ve been around here, there have been drug agents undercover working hard on taking care of our problem, but it’s a problem that’s growing.”

Pouring money into the problem is not the only answer, Borland said. Education also is important. Reaching children at an early age and educating them about the dangers of drugs is a good preventative measure.

“I know we do a good job with that (through) work at schools and all kinds of things,” he said. “We’re working on different ways (to address this) and I think we’re doing as good a job (as we can). It’s not an easy job, but we’re working on it and we’re very aware of it, both countywide and individually in the cities.”

Bennett then answered.

“It’s a multi-faceted situation we have and there’s certainly not one answer,” he said. “Education in the schools is definitely a good place to start, but one of the things we have seen is that incarceration isn’t the only answer because once they get back out, they’re still hooked on it. So we need more money put into treatment programs, along with the law enforcement dollars ... to try and nip it in the bud before it really gets out of hand.”

Once an adult in a family gets into drugs, it seems to pull the children in, Bennett said. It is a “small epidemic now,” but has shown that it can grow rapidly.

“It certainly is a thorny issue,” Christensen said. “These opioid addictions make us all wonder, really, where did this all come from? The quantity and viciousness of the drugs that are now widely available in Jefferson County have really challenged our leaders.”

It is fortunate that there are excellent leaders in county government that are directly involved in fighting the drug problem, he said.

“The TAD program has been an opportunity to see some of this leadership in action,” Christensen said. “We have been visited at the county board meetings by the graduates of that program who have clearly gotten their life back together and, we hope, are going to be able to function and that they do and that these programs can be expanded to the more highly addictive drugs.

“I would say that I think Jefferson County is in a good position, because of our budget situation; we have the resiliency to absorb some of these problems where counties that have more struggles with their budgets would not be able to be so effective,” Christensen added.

Kutz agreed that education is important.

“It’s my opinion that, for most of this at a local county level, our money is better spent to deal with this lower down rather than waiting for higher state funds to try to help out,” Kutz said. “I believe we have the people in this county to be able to deal with this. Obviously, we need to adjust our budgets to deal with this and I think we have the people here to work with.”

- Growth: Address the county’s agriculture preservation plan, smart-growth goals, the county’s plan for growth and what strategies you see for growth.

Borland said he has no personal strategies for growth.

“It’s my first year sitting on the Economic Development Committee and that’s been a great learning experience for me and I’m not sure I understand it all yet,” the incumbent said. “But what we have now is the public cooperative between our county government and the governments of our cities and towns. We are now in a capital campaign to bring together public and private enterprises to work together.”

He was referring to the reorganized Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium following its merger with the Watertown Economic Development Organization.

Borland said that, when he first heard about the partnership, he thought, “theres’ no better way.”

“It’s good to work together and we’re beginning to do that,” he said. “We’re on our way to working on better plans and better results for the economic development in Jefferson County and that includes cities and rural alike.”

Bennett noted that his experience with growth planing only is what has been reported in the county board minutes.

“We certainly need, as a county board, strategies for planning and continued planning and you have to preserve our rural atmosphere, our rural nature that we’ve been known for — a place where families want to come and live and settle down,” Bennett commented.

“We also need more industry here, but we need cooperation with the cities and towns, and as I said, zoning plays a big part of it and our Planning and Zoning Committee will certainly have a lot to help with that smart-growth and strategy as we go down the road.”

Christensen said he believes growth and economic development go hand-in-hand.

“I think, first of all, we want to consider our position geographically,” Christensen said. “Jefferson County is situated in the middle of much more densely populated areas. There’s probably 8- to 10 million people within 100 miles of us and so we seem to be an island of slower growth than most of these outlying areas. I would say (we should look at) counties like Waukesha, Racine, Kenosha, Walworth where, I think, they have not taken the care with the rural development and their zoning rules that we have.”

He said that, while driving through Kenosha, he has seen houses “plumped down” in the middle of “perfectly good farm fields. That damages the opportunity to use the land for what it is best for.

“Mind you, the highest and best use of farmland is farming and not for industrial or commercial or residential development,” the incumbent said. “You should try to concentrate your development in the places where it’s best suited. I think there’s plenty of opportunity though, to attract people (to Jefferson County) and one example I would give you is our county parks system. It is a major component of our economic development strategy.

“We often see people filling the room when an interesting or challenging county parks issue comes up,” Christensen continued. “One thing I’ve seen several times since I’ve been on the board is the major employers coming to the county board and saying how much they appreciate the county parks department because that is a big way that they attract good employees. So I think doing what we do right now and doing it better is the pathway to good economic development.”

Kutz, who was on the Town of Koshkonong Planning Commission for the better part of 10 years, warned that growth needs to be monitored so that government does not end up putting more of a tax burden on fewer people.

“I think our tax base is very important to keep where it can be maintained,” he said. “I think the growth itself has to be adjusted so that we’re not inhibiting other growth in the people that are here, but we certainly do need to get more commerce in the area. I don’t have a specific plan, but I’ve been watching a few other areas and I think some were using the expense of other people to try and build growth for a few, so I think we have to be very careful in what we do there.”

- What roles would you like to be involved in? What committees would you like to serve on for the county board?

“I have served on a variety (of committees) and some are more active in making decisions of a different kind,” Borland said. “But the two committees I’m on now, the UW-Extension Committee and the Economic Development Committee are very important right now and I’m very satisfied to stay with those. I believe in UW-Extension.”

Bennett said he would like to play a role of being one of the leaders as Jefferson County goes forward.

“I would like to ... help lead Jefferson County to the future that looks very exciting, even though we do have some problems facing us,” Bennett said. “One of the committees that I would like to be on would be the Law Enforcement Committee because that certainly has a lot to do with helping to understand and stem the problem we have with drugs in the county. Along with that, the Human Services Department, which kind of has to go hand-in-hand with fighting the drug situation.”

He also would like to be on the Parks Committee, in addition to the Finance Committee to help allocate some of the money to different departments where “it’s going to do the most good and meet the immediate needs to the county.”

Christensen said that some of the committees he currently serves on, including the Parks and Highway committees, are “very complicated.

“They have a lot of detail and long-range goals, so I would like to continue on with those if it’s possible because I’ve developed an understanding of the programs and feel like I could contribute in the future,” he said.

The incumbent said he also would like to continue to serve on the Wisconsin Counties Utility Tax Association and the Lake Ripley Management District.

“Aiming higher, I guess, the Economic Development Committee is important to me,” Christensen said. “I think it would be very interesting, complicated and a steep learning curve, but it would be an interesting committee to serve on. What I want to do is improve the chances for people who live in the county to have a high quality of life. There are many ways to do that in the county. Any of our committee assignments, any of the work that you do, you can fill the need. There’s no shortage of work.”

Kutz said he would like to serve on the Law Enforcement and Highway committees because his highest priorities are safety and safe roadwork.

Also, the Finance Committee would “have a huge amount of input” toward where county money goes, he said, so he feels that would be interesting to be on.

- What do you think of the size (30 members) of the county board?

All the candidates agreed that a 30-member county board has and still is working well.

Borland and Christensen spoke about how costs, and therefore taxes, tend to rise the smaller a board becomes.

Bennett and Kutz said they believe the 30 members handle the workload extremely well and that any fewer would end up distributing too much work among too few people.

- What is your opinion of county infrastructure?

“One thing we all know is that there’s always going to have to be a good infrastructure and it’s always going to deal with and surround the money available,” Borland said. “There are always going to be things in the future that come up and we can’t just pull money up like that. I think we have to spend some money where it’s really necessary.

“I don’t have any ideas on that, I’m not pushing for anything — I just know that’s a reality in my mind, that infrastructure costs money and money is very tight right now so we have to be very careful,” he added.

When it comes to roads, Borland said, he believes you almost have to sit on the Highway Committee to understand how dollars for roads come about. Some of the money comes from the state, but many of the town roads the county pays for itself.

“I think, if we work with the towns and so forth, it is a complicated thing,” he said. “Money is set aside every year to do ‘X’ amount of miles of roads. But understand that road expense is going up and tax money for that doesn’t go up as fast, so it’s a problem and it always will be a problem.”

According to Bennett, infrastructure is like owning a house.

Things are going to wear out, things are going to break,” he said. “Whether it be buildings, roads, furnaces, whatever — we know we have to maintain them at some time and the more we keep up with it, the easier it’s going to be in the long run so we don’t have a big bill at the end.”

Roads and bridges constantly have to be maintained and that is important to the growth as a county, Bennett said.

“If we’re going to attract new businesses and families, we want to have a good infrastructure — decent roads and decent bridges,” the challenger said. “We have to spend money if we’re going to stay ahead of what’s going to wear out day after day.”

Some infrastructure is old, some is new, and all of it needs attention, Christensen said.

“We have an Infrastructure Committee that looks into these issues,” he said. “I’ll start at the top. The first paid infrastructure move recently was regarding the Highway Department. That was a long decision-making process. It took a decade, I think. Part of the problem with that was, new people came on the board before decisions were made and always had to be schooled and brought up to speed.”

Christensen said he favored the new highway shop because the old one was “decrepit.” However, he did not favor siting it on the county farm. Instead, he wanted to keep it on Puerner Street in Jefferson.

“I didn’t win the Puerner Street issue, but I worked hard to make sure that the highway department did not get sited on county farm, which I think is a valuable resource that we don’t want to divide

up and turn into an industrial site,” he said. “Fortunately, we were able to find another site, which was the old Countryside Home site, and put the facility there and it’s functioning wonderfully right now.

“As to the rest of the county, we are looking at things like replacing furnaces, boilers, doors, windows, security,” he continued. “These things are constantly a rotating set of problems. We are addressing these problems. We have the money to do it, the expertise and the people, it’s just a constant challenge to make sure our facilities are meeting the needs.”

When infrastructure is mentioned, Kutz said, his first thought runs to roads and bridges.

“I’ve been in contact with the state Department of Transportation for several meetings on county projects,” Kutz said. “While the state plans most of these, I think our local roads need to be addressed, so in the process of fixing the main roads, we don’t destroy the local ones. The other stuff, obviously as with our homes, we have to maintain them as they need it. Whether that means new furnace, new boilers, if that’s what it needs to work it’s still county infrastructure.”