

VOTE 2021

Show us the \$\$\$\$

A look at campaign finance in the Nov. 2 Camas-Washougal elections

By KELLY MOYER
Post-Record staff writer

Candidates running for mayoral, city council, school board and port commissioner seats in Camas-Washougal have raised tens of thousands of dollars for their campaigns during the build up to the Nov. 2 General and Special Election.

Following is a look at the campaign financing data — including who donated to the candidates, how much money came from outside the local area and how each candidate has spent their contributions — behind the Camas mayoral, Camas and Washougal city council, Camas and Washougal school board and Port of Camas-Washougal Board of Commissioners races included on Camas-Washougal voters' Nov. 2 ballots:

CAMAS MAYOR

The Camas mayoral race between current Camas City Councilman Steve Hogan and Camas-Washougal Chamber of Commerce Director Jennifer Senescu has brought in more than \$56,000 in cash and in-kind contributions.

Hogan:

One week before the election, Hogan, who has served on the city council for 16 years and acted as the city's mayor pro-

tem in 2014 and 2017, had raised \$28,824, including \$2,168 in in-kind donations, for his campaign.

Hogan's contributions include several donations from current and former Camas-Washougal officials and other high-profile residents, including Washougal Mayor Molly Coston (\$200), Camas Mayor Ellen Burton (\$50), Camas City Councilman Greg Anderson (\$50), former Camas mayor Scott Higgins and his wife, Allison Higgins (\$250 each), former Washougal city councilwoman Joyce Lindsey (\$50), Port of Camas-Washougal Director David Ripp (\$50) and well-known Camas High School soccer coach Roland Minder (\$100).

Other contributions coming into Hogan's campaign include:

- \$2,269.38 from himself;
- \$16,155 from Camas residents (61 percent of his total contributions not including the money Hogan has injected into his campaign);
- \$10,400 from residents living outside the city of Camas, including \$300 from Washougal residents and \$4,800 from Vancouver residents;
- 12 donors who contributed \$1,000 each: Camas Storage, LLC; Washington Association of Realtors Political Affairs Council; Constantinos and Jeannine

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Washougal School Board member Donna Sinclair holds signs in support of herself and her fellow board member, Chuck Carpenter, during a sign-waving event before the Nov. 2, 2021 election.

'Far beyond typical politics'

Washougal school board official says she has become target of personal attacks, harassment

By KELLY MOYER
Post-Record staff writer

School board members across the nation have reported an uptick in harassment, intimidation and threats of violence this year. The problem has grown to such extreme levels, the National School Boards Association (NSBA), an 81-year-old organization representing more than 95,000 school boards, recently asked the federal government to investigate these threats.

On Oct. 4, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland directed the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and U.S. attorneys' office to gather with national, state and local law

enforcement leaders to discuss ways of addressing the issue.

"Threats against public servants are not only illegal, they run counter to our nation's core values," Garland stated in his outreach to the FBI. "Those who dedicate their time and energy to ensuring that our children receive a proper education in a safe environment deserve to be able to do their work without fear for their safety."

In Camas and Washougal, school board meetings that used to be somewhat solemn affairs devoted to the daily business of running a school district, have recently become ground zero for heated

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Washougal School Board member Donna Sinclair (center) and her supporters hold signs in support of the school board incumbents, Sinclair and Chuck Carpenter, during a sign-waving event before the Nov. 2, 2021 election.

Washougal ballots packed with races

City council, mayor, school board and port seats up for grabs

By DOUG FLANAGAN
Post-Record staff writer

Washougal voters will help decide the future of the Port of Camas-Washougal Board of Commissioners, the Washougal City Council and the Washougal School Board in the Nov. 2 General and Special Election.

Ballots went out to voters in mid-October, and must be mailed by Election Day, delivered to the Clark County Elections Office, 1408 Franklin St., Vancouver, by 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 2 (Election Day) or dropped into one off the 22 red, permanent ballot drop boxes throughout the county by 8 p.m. Nov. 2.

People who wish to register to vote and receive a ballot must register in-person at the county elections office in Vancouver, also by 8 p.m. on Election Day.

For more information, or to review the online Voters Pamphlet, visit clark.wa.gov/elections/november-2-2021-general-special-election.

Following is information about the candidates Washougal voters will see on their Nov. 2 General and Special Election ballots:

Port of Camas-Washougal, No. 3 commissioner

Port of Camas-Washougal commission president Larry Keister and former Port employee Jeremy Wilcox are vying for the Port's No. 3 commissioner position.

Keister has served as a Port commissioner since 2017.

"Our Port is doing well, making great progress on some important projects and building a foundation for a thriving future. I'm running for reelection to keep this critical momentum going," Keister told the Post-Record. "More broadly, I'm running because the work of the Port

is so important to our community. If there's one thing I've learned while serving as a Port commissioner for the past five years, it's that few people understand the importance of Port commissioners."

Keister studied at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, and served in the United States Marine Corps. He is retired from his job as a water quality technician at the Portland Veterans Administration Medical Center.

He is a member of the Columbia River Economic Development Committee board of Directors and the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council. He is also involved with the Camas-Washougal Rotary Club and the Camas-Washougal Chamber of Commerce.

He said the Port will be challenged in the short term to acquire funding for six additional lots at the east end of the Steigerwald Industrial Park and in the long term to acquire land for future growth. Keister, a member of the state Department of Ecology's Georgia Pacific mill site cleanup planning committee, believes that "when and if (the Camas) property becomes available, the Port (will be) interested in helping with any environmental cleanup and to assure that the redevelopment zoning would benefit downtown Camas and our community."

"Our Port has many important projects underway, from the waterfront development to the expansion of the industrial park, and with my experience, relationships, and leadership (abilities), I can help these be completed successfully," he said. "I've proven myself as a trusted leader, I can help keep us on track to achieve our strategic goals, and I'm eager to continue serving."

Wilcox graduated from Washougal High School in 1996 and served in the United States Navy from 1998 to 2002. He worked as a maintenance lead, project manager and facilities manager for the

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City of Camas seeks public's input on transportation plan

By KELLY MOYER
Post-Record staff writer

Interested in how Camas officials might invest in future transportation projects, including not just road improvements but also bicycle lanes, pedestrian walkways and safer intersections? City leaders want to hear from you.

The city of Camas has posted an online survey on its Engage Camas website to gauge residents' most important transportation issues and help guide the city's Transportation System Plan (TSP).

"This plan will guide how we develop and invest in streets, pedestrian and bike facilities, and transit to meet the current and future needs of Camas and the surrounding areas," the city's introduction to the online survey notes. "It will help determine which projects, policies and programs are important to enhancing the quality of life in the city."

Camas Engineering Manager James Carothers discussed the 20-year transportation plan with Camas City Council

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WHS students bring back haunted house Schools, Page A7



Celebrated coach returning to lead Camas boys soccer Sports, Page A6

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Ford death ruled suicide

Washougal mayoral candidate found dead in Ohio hotel room

By DOUG FLANAGAN
Post-Record staff writer

The death of Derik Ford, the former Washougal mayoral candidate who died unexpectedly last week at the age of 45, has been ruled a suicide.

A representative from the Butler County, Ohio, coroner's office confirmed the manner of death on Thursday, Oct. 21.

Rebecca Irvin, a sergeant for the Fairfield Police Department in Ohio, said Ford's body was discovered Oct. 15, at the Extended Stay America hotel in Fairfield.

Ford, 45, who owned 2 Rivers Bar and Grill in Washougal as well as several Massage Envy massage

parlors in Oregon, had received criticism from local residents about his controversial past, which included being fired from an Oregon police department; backing Massage Envy employees accused of sexually assaulting clients; lying about being dismissed from a police academy; and violating a restraining order following domestic violence allegations.

Despite the controversies, Ford finished in second place in August's primary election, beating longtime Washougal City Councilman Paul Greenlee for a chance to compete against the top vote-getter, Rochelle Ramos, in the Nov. 2 general election.

Last month, after being arrested and charged with

domestic violence on Sept. 15, Ford said he was suspending his political campaign.



Derik Ford

Ford was scheduled to appear in court on Nov. 2, and had already pleaded not guilty to a fourth-degree assault in mid-September and, more recently, pleaded not guilty to additional allegations that he was violating a no-contact order.

Ford's name will still appear on Washougal voters' ballots for the Nov. 2, 2021 General and Special Election.

Attacks:

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outbursts and disruptive protests over everything from opposition to public health mandates during the COVID-19 pandemic to a backlash against equity and inclusion policies addressing achievement gaps among groups of students, including students

of color, students from impoverished families and students with disabilities. Dozens of people who have come to Camas and Washougal school board meetings over the past few months have refused to follow mask policies, yelled at board members, ignored three-minute time limits and threatened to oust board members who did not agree to rebel against the state's public health mandates during

the pandemic. And while much of the ire seems to be directed toward the board as a group, one local school board member told The Post-Record she has experienced personal attacks that go far beyond the normal scope of normal political differences. Washougal School Board member Donna Sinclair, who is running for reelection on Nov. 2, said she has become the target of harassment and intimidation.

"They've targeted the entire board, but also they've targeted me specifically ... saying things that are libelous, slanderous and absolutely untrue," Sinclair said.

One person has used Sinclair's name to create a fake website, mimicking her campaign and falsely claiming that Sinclair, a history professor at Washington State University Vancouver and grandmother of a Washougal student, believes "the state should have total control" of children's education and that she advocates for teaching inappropriate sexual content to young children.

And then there are the more-pointed attacks, including one from a man who recently told board members he was "sharpening bullets for a civil war" before pointing to Sinclair's opponent, Sadie McKenzie, on his way out of the September board meeting and urging peo-

ple to vote for McKenzie rather than Sinclair.

A month before this, members of the Proud Boys, a group designated by the Canadian government as a far-right "terrorist entity," came to an August school board meeting and called Sinclair out by name, saying she was "scared" of the Proud Boys' "brotherhood" and "hiding behind (her) mask" before telling board members they "wouldn't forget them."

Sinclair responded during the August school board meeting, saying she felt it was important to allow people an opportunity to speak to their elected officials, but that the school board needed to ensure "a safe, respectful environment for everyone."

'You can feel a growing tension'

The 2021 campaign is the second time Sinclair has asked Washougal voters to elect her to the local school board. She won her seat in 2017, after running a campaign based on improving Washougal's public education system, asking pointed questions about the district's finances and investigating how well the district was serving its special needs students.

And while every campaign season can get a bit heated, Sinclair said this time feels different.

"You can feel a growing tension in the community," Sinclair said. "I kept thinking this would die down, but the reality is that it's just ramping up."

A group known as the Washougal Moms formed in May to support community members accused by the school board and Washougal police of disrupting a Washougal School Board meeting.

In June, the Washougal Moms gathered 400 people inside the Black Pearl on the Columbia to hold a "tribunal" to elect a shadow school board, bash the school district for adhering to the state's public health COVID-19 mandates and call for the removal of the entire Washougal School Board.

Since then, the group has repeatedly called out Sinclair online and recently praised the person behind the anti-Donna Sinclair website.

"It's one thing to challenge a public official, it's another to slander their professional name," Sinclair noted.

The Post-Record reached out to the Washougal Moms for comment. Instead of responding, the group posted The Post-Record's email to its Telegram site with the following comment: "The far left inaccurate post record sent this email today ... the post record is owned by the far left leaning biased paper 'the Columbian.' ... We will respond to them tomorrow, but seeing as their writers rarely report the truth without manipulation and lies, our answer to them will be minimal to say the least."

Chuck Carpenter, another Washougal School Board member hoping to retain his seat in the Nov.

2 election, said he has been spared the type of hostile comments often directed toward Sinclair online and at board meetings.

"That group focused on Donna early on and she has gotten most of their attention. I haven't experienced that, for whatever reason," Carpenter said.

A longtime Washougal volunteer who served on the city's parks, salary and tourism commissions, and was the secretary of the Washougal Business Association and treasurer of the Washougal Arts and Culture Alliance before being appointed to the school board in 2020, Carpenter said he frequently hears misinformation coming from people associated with the Washougal Moms group and others who have tried to malign Sinclair and the school board.

"That group has started to say we're teaching (critical race theory), but if you were to ask any teacher in the district (if they were teaching the graduate-school theory most commonly found in law school classes), they would just look at you with a blank look and say, 'Of course not,'" Carpenter said, adding that people he's talked to on the campaign trail have only wanted to talk about two things: critical race theory and the mask mandate.

"I have not had any questions or comments about other issues," Carpenter said.

'They've silenced people'

Despite the heated board meetings and ramped-up personal attacks, both Carpenter and Sinclair said they still want to volunteer for the school board and still hope voters will back them on Nov. 2.

"I'm there for the kids," Carpenter said. "All of our discussions as a board are about policy matters and making sure things are going well. We have an excellent administration and things are really going well by any measure."

Sinclair, a product of the Evergreen public school district in Vancouver who moved to Washougal in 2007, said she hopes her town will find its way past the politics that have divided the community.

"We all need to be kind to one another and recognize we're all under stress, especially during the pandemic," Sinclair said, adding that, despite the personal attacks, she still believes people should question their elected officials and push back when they feel officials are not acting in the community's best interests.

"I'm happy to answer questions and talk to people, to have real conversations with people. We should get to know each other and try to give one another the benefit of the doubt," Sinclair said. "This is a volunteer position. I'm not doing it for money or fame ... or because it's a political stepping stool. I'm a mother and a grandparent, and I understand there are people who came into this fighting for their children. I would be fighting for my

kids, too."

Though the personal attacks have not swayed Sinclair away from wanting to serve her community, she said she does fear the vitriol is causing many Washougal School District family members to question their participation at public school board meetings.

"They've silenced people," Sinclair said. "If you support me and your name is listed in the meeting minutes, it's quite likely that your personal information will be put out there ... so now we have people who send us letters of support, but don't want to sign their names."

Sinclair has wondered what her opponent — who is backed financially by Republican state senator Lynda Wilson — thinks of the personal attacks directed toward Sinclair.

"I'd sure like to know if she and (Wilson) will denounce these tactics of hate, anger, lies and fear," Sinclair said.

McKenzie had not responded to The Post-Record's request for comment in time for this newspaper's print deadline.

Sen. Wilson said her support for McKenzie is "separate from (her) views on how people behave at public meetings."

"Like it or not, democracy can be messy and emotional," Wilson stated in an email to The Post-Record. "Few things get people's attention as much as questions about the education of their children, and the costs and policies associated with it. That is true at the legislative level as well as the local level. ... If an elected official believes he or she has been on the receiving end of speech that is not protected by the First Amendment, and has crossed instead into hate speech or harassment or threats that are addressed elsewhere in law, that person is free to pursue whatever remedy they believe is appropriate."

For people who want to see Washougal become a less-divided community, Sinclair and Carpenter have some advice: "I would suggest that, when people hear something negative — or positive — they check it out for themselves to find out if it's real," Carpenter said.

Sinclair agreed: "Talk to your neighbors. Stop watching national news to find out what's happening in your own community ... and stop allowing politics to define your relationships," she urged other Washougal residents. "We all need to work together."

"I also hope the good people of Washougal will recognize the instability that goes far beyond typical hard politics to conspiracy theories and the kind of intense animosity we try to teach our children to avoid," Sinclair said. "This is not a congressional or presidential campaign, it's not even state level. This is about nonpartisan governance of our education system, the very institution we rely on to teach our children to be responsible citizens in a civil society."

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CAMAS-WASHOUGAL POST-RECORD

Tips greatly appreciated

The Post-Record always appreciates a good news tip. Is there a person, event or issue we should know about?

Send your news tips to Managing Editor Kelly Moyer at **kelly.moyer@camaspostrecord.com**.

Washougal-related news tips also can go straight to our Washougal reporter Doug Flanagan at **doug.flanagan@camaspostrecord.com**.



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