

READER

Arts, entertainment, bluster and some news

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**DON'T
FORGET
TO VOTE
MAY 18**

**IT'S BEEN A DRY
NORTH IDAHO
SPRING SO FAR,
BUT SEVERAL
FACTORS
DETERMINE THE
TRAJECTORY
OF WILDFIRE
SEASON**

May 18 election guide

To help share candidates' positions on the issues, the Reader offers an election guide for the upcoming May 18 election. What follows are brief biographical entries on each candidate and some questions to help define their positions. The topics covered this week are the East Bonner Library District Board race and the West Bonner County School District levy.

Q&A with East Bonner Library District Board candidates

By Zach Hagadone
Reader Staff

The East Bonner County Library District Board of Trustees election features four candidates — two incumbents and two challengers — vying for two open six-year term seats on the five-person governing body, which operates as a county taxing district and is responsible for setting library policy; setting and overseeing the library budget; hiring, supervising, evaluating and working alongside the library director; and ensuring that the community is well represented and informed about the district's operations.

The *Reader* reached out to each candidate with a selection of identical questions to help inform voters ahead of the election, slated for Tuesday, May 18. Candidates were given up to 200 words for their responses.

Visit bonnercountyid.gov/departments/Elections for more information.

- Questions, with answers numbered accordingly:
1. Tell us a bit about yourself and why you have chosen to run for a trustee seat on the East Bonner County Library Board?

2. How would you describe the library's role in the community? In what ways is it succeeding in that purpose, and in what ways does it need to improve?

3. There has been much politicization of the library board in the past year — particularly stemming from the COVID-19 protocols, including masking. Do you see this as a political position? Why/why not?

Jeanine Asche
(Incumbent)

Age: 66 years young

How many years lived in Bonner County: I am an Idaho native and I have lived in Bonner County for nine years.

Relevant qualifications: Incumbent library trustee since 2013, past chairperson and volunteer (current); 40 years of library experience (page, clerk, children's librarian, reference librarian, branch manager, youth library services manager, library outreach and literacy services manager for a 13-branch library system); fiscally conservative; library expansion fundraising chair (\$302,000 raised collaboratively); Children's and Young Adult Services Association past president; extensive grant writing, program development, budget and personnel management experience; community nonprofit board president, treasurer, secretary experience; avid supporter of the First Amendment and the right to information; and awards including Reading Association's Service Award, Outstanding Public Service Award, Outstanding Librarian in Support of Literacy, Women in County Government's Woman of the Year and Women's Hall of Fame.

How your constituents can contact you: jeanine@ebonnerlibrary.org, home: 208-597-7856, cell 650-224-3096

1. I am an Idaho native and a Sandpoint resident of nine years. I am a retired librarian and my husband of 41 years is a retired fire chief. We have two grown children, one, a local grocery store employee and the other, a commander in the U.S. Navy. I have an amazing



Jeanine Asche.

granddaughter and two rambunctious dogs. In my spare time, I'm an amateur painter, beginning gardener, book lover and hiker.

Because I believe community service is something everyone should do, I started volunteering at the library shortly after moving here. I began by leading story times and then as a "Tech Tutor." I was appointed to the board of trustees in 2013 and then was later elected.

Having worked in many libraries, I know we have an amazing library system for our community's size. In order to ensure our library continues to be run efficiently and effectively, library trustees must have the right skills and qualifications. My contributions as a library trustee since 2013, my 40 years of library experience and my extensive nonprofit background are what is needed again.

2. The vision statement of our library is, "to engage community, excite curiosity and enhance personal growth." Having worked in multiple libraries, I know our library is meeting this and it is extremely well run. Our director was named Library Director of the Year in Idaho and the staff are dedicated to library service.

COVID-19 has put an incredible amount of stress on all of them and they all rolled with the punches as best they could.

The board of trustees are all very qualified and we all get along very well because of our common goals. We are all committed to the First Amendment and freedom of information and maintaining excellent library services.

The library is very sound financially. When I was chairperson of the board, I oversaw the community fundraising efforts for the recent expansion project. Donations amounted to \$302,000. Also, while I was chairperson, the library paid off its construction bond — early. This year I, and the other capable trustees, made responsible policy decisions that reduced our annual budget.

Though no institution is perfect, the East Bonner County Library is succeeding in every way.

3. The mask policy was instituted at a time when COVID-19 was spreading widely and infection rates were soaring. Trustees have a responsibility to keep our staff and public safe, and we were following guidelines from the CDC and the state and local guidelines. Our policy was not based on anything political; it was simply what we considered responsible.

As a retired librarian, providing equal library access is a core value of mine that is non-political. I urged our board and staff to ensure equal services for everyone — masked or not. Staff did an excellent job of developing procedures to do this through curbside services and offering eBooks, audio books and online resources. Patrons could request any material and it would be delivered to their car. No one was denied service. Our board is now considering

ways to revise the current mask policy while maintaining a safe environment for everyone.

As a trustee, in addition to ensuring our library is safe, my purpose is to support the library's mission, ensure excellent library services and be a good steward of the community's hard-earned tax contributions. This, too, is not political. It is just sound management.

Amy Flint
(Incumbent)



Amy Flint.

Age: 64

How many years lived in Bonner County: 30

Relevant qualifications: I have served on the East Bonner County Board of Trustees for six years and as board chair for almost two. I have a clear understanding of how the library functions, the laws governing it, and the trustees' role. I worked in the library at my university, and I have been a patron of the East Bonner County library for 30 years — ever since I moved to Bonner County. I taught English at NIC at Sandpoint for 18 years before retiring and took my English 102 students to the library each semester for a presentation on how to access and critically evaluate scholarly information from databases and library holdings. I have served on the Habitat for

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Humanity and Bonner County Food Bank boards as well as being a board member and president of the Angels Over Sandpoint. Community service is an important element of my life and, now that I'm retired, I have ample time to devote to community support. I am open-minded, reasonable, diligent, and collaborative. These qualities are critical for a library trustee.

How your constituents can contact you: amyflint@ebonnerlibrary.org

1. Libraries offer a critical community resource and connection point, especially in smaller rural areas. I raised four daughters, and we utilized the library regularly; since I initially lived in Hope, the library quickly became a weekly stop — for both books and movies. I moved to Sandpoint in 1998 and continued my weekly visits to the library. My love for (and appreciation of) libraries inspired me to do whatever I could to support our local library, so running for a trustee position was a natural fit. We currently have a very highly functioning board; I have demonstrated my skills over the past six years as a trustee and would like to continue the positive momentum already in place.

2. Today, libraries serve countless roles — while physical books, periodicals, movies and music continue to be well-utilized by patrons, our extensive digital collection provides additional resources that support patrons and Bonner County residents. Our adult tutoring services, along with youth programming and support, are invaluable. Meeting rooms provide community groups with a free option, and we now have excellent technology available for meetings. Our bookmobile service allows us to extend options to rural residents unable to visit our larger facility, and the addition of a garden offers further opportunities for education, events and exploration.

It's challenging for libraries to serve so many needs in the community, but we are succeeding admirably. COVID-19 has prevented us from continuously serving in all capacities, but we now have our meeting rooms available again and will begin opening up many of the services that were limited or discontinued during the height of the pandemic.

Two identified areas of improvement are purchasing a new bookmobile and finishing the garden. Both are in process and should be completed this year. We have also identified a need to expand our after-school options for students and will be considering creative solutions to address that critical need.

3. The library trustee position is absolutely not political; board members do not identify their political affiliation, nor does that have any bearing on our process or decisions. We decided to implement a mask requirement based solely on the best possible scientific information available; our primary concern was keeping both patrons and staff as safe as possible. We were appalled when our mask requirement became a political issue. However, we continued to follow recommendations from trustworthy science-based sources despite the controversy, protests and verbal abuse of staff. The majority of our patrons thanked us for continuing the policy.

Fortunately, reduced and stable virus cases in Bonner County along with access to immunization will allow us to discontinue our mask policy effective June 1.

Jalon Peters



Age: 39

How many years lived in Bonner County: 4

Relevant qualifications: Highly administrative and fiscally responsible.

How your constituents can contact you: jalonapeters@yahoo.com

1. I have been married for almost 20 years, I have three sons. I am a business owner and conservative. I have chosen to run because I

love the library (as I have taken my boys there countless times before the unconstitutional mandates), and feel as though libraries are/or can be very influential to our community. I feel as though the sitting board does not represent the vast majority of our community and they aren't making decisions outside of their agendas.

2. I feel the library's role is to be a resource for all people in the community, no matter who they are. That may be through technology, or books, or magazines, or internet or meeting rooms. The library has done a decent job of this with how they have stayed on track with tech. They also have good meeting rooms, but they are limiting it at the moment due to the unconstitutional mask mandates. The library also seems to not have staff that is ready and willing to help, but rather they seem to want to find ways to not have to help you. At least that has been my experience. I also feel like we can make the meeting rooms much more available to the public, especially to homeschoolers during the day. Also, the financials are not accessible online, they are in a binder in the basement. But you are required to wear a mask to enter the building. And I would like to know if that basement is handicapped accessible?

3. It shouldn't be, but the "line" has seemed to be drawn at the party line. It shouldn't be a political issue, it is a personal liberty issue. And that is for both Democrats and Republicans. People should have the right to choose what is best for themselves and their family without some bureaucrat or board member mandating something that is outside the supreme law of the Constitution. Without personal liberties we have no corporate liberties.

ELECTION INFORMATION

• Absentee ballot applications must be received by the county clerk by 5 p.m. on Friday, May 7.

• Absentee ballots must be received (not just post-marked) by May 18 at 8 p.m.

• Election day is Tues., May 18

• Check Sandpoint Online's Election Central for a list of polling place addresses

Kathy Rose



Age: No response

How many years lived in Bonner County: 7

Relevant experience: Bachelor's degree, American International College; diverse experience: small business entrepreneur, 22 years; document control specialist, 2 years; manufacturing environment, 16 years; elected as School Board Trustee; serving as secretary of the Bonner County Republican Central Committee since 2016; served 2 years as vice president, Bonner County Republican Women, Inc.; treasurer for a U.S. congressional candidate.

How your constituents can contact you: liberty4idaho@yahoo.com.

1. My husband and I moved here to retire and have a simpler life. We soon realized that North Idaho was going down the same path as the socialist states and decided to become active in the community. There are many small boards in the county to serve on. I love my library. I thought about running two years ago but someone else stepped up.

You'll agree, there have been a lot of changes over the past year. The current library board has demonstrated that it does not represent many of the taxpayers who fund the library. That needs to change. People are standing up to tyranny and locally we have the greatest ability to make changes. The choice is clear in this election, choose liberty or we permit tyranny.

2. The library of every community is essential to community strength. It should bring the community together, not divide it. It should be a welcoming focal point to share education, knowledge and freely exchange ideas. I agree with their own Code of Conduct policy:

"barrier-free environment that promotes its educational role and permits the peaceful, undisturbed use of library collections and services by patrons. The right of all patrons to peaceably access library facilities, collections and services shall not be abridged."

I believe the library can improve its marketing. Patrons need to know about the broad array of services available such as the seed library and hotspot lending. I also think there is room for improvement in transparency. I submitted a public records request for a financial form and was told they would need to request it from the county offices. Why don't they keep copies of their own financial documents?

3. Like many people, I used to visit the library on a frequent basis, when there was free access. Since the closure and mask mandate, I have only visited once. People feel unwelcome and don't want to be trespassed. I feel this policy is discriminatory, exclusionary and beyond their authority.

In an obvious political move, the library district held a "special meeting" on April 30 to discuss their mask policy, which they have shrugged their shoulders at for the past year. The decision for a mask requirement was rooted in enforcing CDC guidelines. They now believe it is OK to lift the requirement next month even though the CDC requirements have not changed. Why the change of heart?

This election goes beyond a mask mandate, which is a symptom of the underlying problem. The current board represents the minority of the community and has shown they will bend to them. The library will face future pressures to surrender to cancel culture. It will be subtle at first, but we cannot allow this to creep in and take hold in Bonner County.

My experience is diverse. I believe any board functions better with members who represent the diversity of the community. I offer my representation to be your voice.

