

Gurney has no conflicts of interest

By Gary Haga

Commissioner John Sweet is a nice man, but his association with several nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations seem to conflict with his position on the Board of Commissioners, which may have contributed to several bad decisions on his part.

Recently, Commissioner Sweet voted to give the management of 84.3 miles of county roads over to the authority of the Coquille Indian Tribe, which eliminates the ability of the Roads Department to prioritize road improvements. It also gives the Tribe an edge in negotiating for other projects, such as the management of the Wagon Road Lands. County voters passed a resolution against allowing the Coquille's from managing these lands, but that did not stop Mr. Sweet from relinquishing his authority to the tribe as an elected official.

Voters should note that John Sweet has a very close working relationship with the Coquilles and he refuses to release his response to the tribal survey given to candidates during the last elections cycle. The Commissioner is a board member of the Coquille Tribal Community Fund, which is a nonprofit organization involved with several undertakings throughout the county. As a voting member of this board, John has the ability to direct the revenue stream of this organization, giving him the opportunity to choose who receives this funding. The ability to give away money to benefit his constituents is the first conflict.

Mr. Sweet is also a member of the Ford Family Foundation, an organization that has worked closely on projects financially

supported by the Coquille Tribal Community Fund, giving the commissioner a considerable amount of undue influence in the county. Many in the community believe John Sweet is using this influence to keep his position on the County Board of Commissioners, demonstrating a second conflict of interest.

In a work session absent of Commissioner Bob Main, John Sweet and Mellissa Cribbins voted in favor of the county joining the South Coast Community Foundation and then the two voted to make Sweet a board member of this group. Public tax dollars will fund the SCCF and all the money is discretionary where open meeting laws do not apply, which many see as an extreme conflict for Mr. Sweet.

Commissioner Candidate Don Gurney does not have these conflicts of interest, and therefore he has a clear conscience to vote on these issues. So I am voting for Don Gurney for Coos County Commissioner.