

HIPFISH MONTHLY

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THE CHANGE

AN EXCITING TIME FOR COASTAL TOWNS
AS ELECTIONS BODE TRANSFORMATIONS

ELECTION SECTION
CONTINUED HERE!



WARRENTON BEGINS FIRST EVER MAYORAL RACE AND FOUR FIGHT FOR SEAT 4 ON CITY COMMISSION: SMALL TOWN POLITICS AT ITS FINEST

PART I: MEET THE MAYOR, CONT.

AND WHAT OF OVER SATURATION? And worse yet, taking the charm out of Warrenton?

"The market will determine when enough is enough, and that's going to happen eventually. There is a lot of land in Warrenton and because there is there is more potential. That doesn't mean we do it irresponsibly, we need to put our design standards in place. System Development Charges was a huge thing we did in the last few years which makes these retail stores or developments pay for their sewer, water, and storm water, street and parks impact, so basically they are paying a premium when they come in. They are not paying for just them, they are paying for the capacity that everybody is using in the city of Warrenton. That is going to help our parks, our streets, it's going to help our storm water fund and our water fund which needs help. Before 2011 or no, 2012, we didn't have System Development Charges, it's that recent, before then it was really on the backs of people that were paying property taxes and paying rates to pay for these capacity types of improvements, and now businesses have to pay up front for that. Which means a big boost.

"As far as attracting business, Warrenton is open for business, and I think we've made it clear we want to work with businesses. We want to be smart about it and have smart growth.

"We've talked a lot about for years what should we change with our design standards. We sat down with the planning commission, the city commission, the community development director and said, 'Hey do we want to make some tweaks, changes to what we have? Do we want to have themes?' We tried to have a theme out there at one time, and no one really could agree on what they wanted to see. We know we wanted more attractive structures, so there were some changes to what type of material you would have to have on the exterior, we've made some changes to landscaping. Landscaping was a big issue back in 2000, this was before many of these stores came in, back before Home Depot in fact. We've done what we can to reach a consensus, we haven't made real substantive changes to the design standards, we've all participated in trying to put our own opinion in what we would like to see out there but in the end we have our design standards in place, and I think that they insure that the stores are going to be attractive for the most part, and I think that they are. I still think there is enough character in Warrenton that there is still a place for the mom & pops and the Skipanon Brands, and that's what I am hoping. People can shop where they want to shop and support who they want to support, that is at least my philosophy."



Finally, of course is the question on many minds in Warrenton, Clatsop County and beyond. How do you feel about a Liquefied Natural Gas facility (LNG) coming to the shores of Warrenton?

"As I've seen with what has happened with county commissioner Huhtala, I know that making some kind of statement about LNG when there is something pending is not a good practice. It's a land use decision at this time because they have come back to the city and said they are moving forward with the federal process and they will be presenting a site design. I don't want to prejudice myself by saying anything, I will look at whatever they present, and I will look at it the same way I did when I looked at it back in 2005. I have to be careful how I address that after what happened to Mr. Huhtala. They said Peter Huhtala was biased based on statements he made before he was even elected

to the commission.

"I don't know what questions will be raised when it comes to the planning commission or what questions will be raised by anyone appealing it, because I know it will be appealed.

"I don't know what they are going to appeal it on, so it is tough for me to make a decision. I want a lot of discussion at the local level, I want to know what the community thinks about it prior to us putting something through. That is important to me, just getting public input on it and having a transparent process to it. That doesn't always occur, and I want to make sure we do explain it step by step.

"Really, the federal government is probably going to make the final decision on a lot of these things.

"I voted the first time around that I thought the process wasn't complete, on the zone change issue I said I didn't want the zone change permitted, and I also didn't like the conditional use determination because I think both of them had a lot of unanswered questions as we went through the process. That's why I voted no the first time around."

One last thing, since we are talking about Warrenton, what is your favorite seafood?

My favorite is tuna, which might not be everybody's favorite, but I think albacore tuna is really hard to beat. I do a lot of barbecued albacore tuna. We do that a lot in August and we actually do that up through October. This year it was kind of up and down and I didn't always have fresh tuna because the boats weren't coming in here, but any time I got it we cooked a barbecued tuna dinner.

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WARRENTON'S POLITICAL RACES represent the ideals America was built upon, not necessarily the ideals of the founding fathers who only wanted land owners to vote, rather the "American Dream" millions of immigrants and every American school child has been sold on, the one where we all have the power to be elected to any lofty office we put our mind to, and always for the best intentions.

In seeking out candidates for the position of Commissioner and Mayor in Warrenton, I did not step into a single law office, there were no \$200 a plate dinners, and there were certainly no limo rides with campaign managers on smart phones doing spin and damage control. Instead there were visits to a small family owned cannery, a NAPA auto parts store, and even a boat in the Warrenton Harbor. There is something reassuring about the future of our nation and democracy in meeting these diverse candidates, all of them seem genuinely concerned about the community they live in, and all sincerely want to make it a better place.

I asked Rick Newton questions about his platform at the counter of his NAPA store. We paused periodically so he could help customers. He donated car wash supplies to the local high school for their weekend fundraiser, and bought chocolate covered cranberries from another organization representative a few minutes later. Clerks addressed many of the customers by name, and the smell of popcorn popping harkens back to another time and another world.

So what is the most important issue facing Warrenton right now?

"Crime," Rick Newton says firmly, it is one of the few times during our talk that he was not offering a friendly smile.

"Come over here," he says walking to the open back door of the store he has run for 37 years. "See that house? There's a little girl there who walks ruts in the street going back and forth selling drugs every day. It took them a year and a half to bust that house on the other side of the street because the FBI was doing an investigation and that is how long it took. Some people who lived on the block sold their houses and moved because they couldn't stand to live there."

I ask him why he thinks the problem is so bad in Warrenton, and he drops an alarming fact - The Warrenton High School drop out rate is 30%! We

ponder the reasons why, lack of opportunity, weak family structure, the economy, but what can anyone do about it?

"The only thing I can think of that a commissioner can do to combat the rampant drug problem in Warrenton is to support the police department and make decisions that make it harder for the drug traffic to go on."

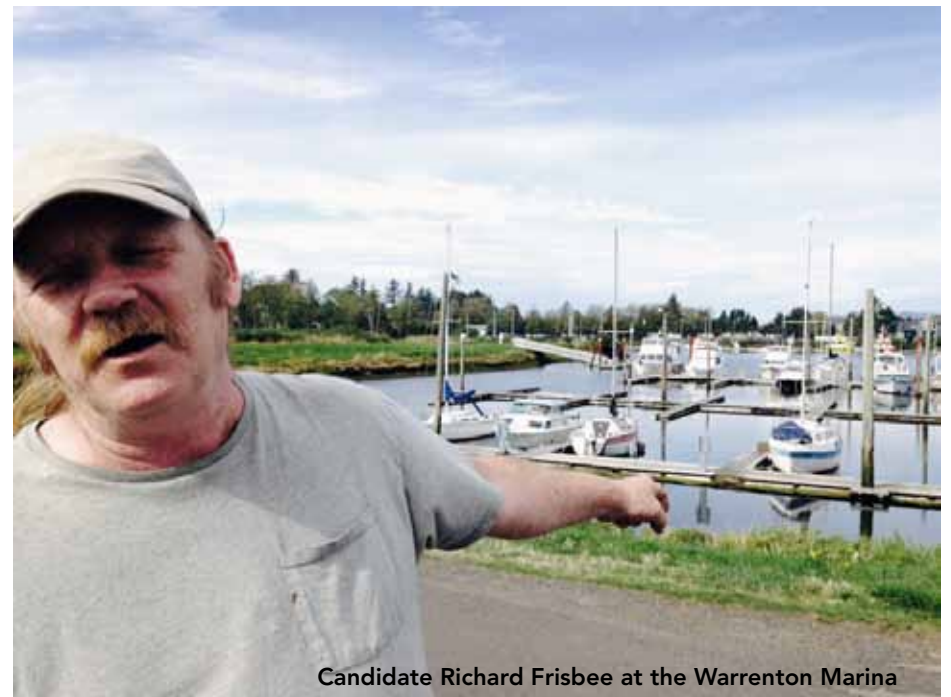
Pam Ackley, a realtor who has made her home in Warrenton since 1993 and is running for the same Commissioner seat agrees crime needs to be addressed. "As a matter of public safety, our police department needs more officers and a detective. They are severely understaffed. The growing hard drug problems need to be addressed by working together with local law enforcement to make sure we have adequate staffing to handle adverse situations."

Down in the Warrenton Marina, fellow Commissioner candidate (and yes, all for the same seat) is Richard Frisbee who lives on a 44 foot boat. "I am the only veteran running for the office, and there is not a single vet on the board, so if elected I would be the only one, and certainly the only disabled one." He agrees crime is a problem, but points to the main issue of his platform, the Marina.

"See how nice and level this stock is that you just walked down, now look at this one." Frisbee talks as I follow him down the maze of docks from the parking lot to where his boat is. He points as he turns to the next stretch of dock, it's at a 45 degree tilt, it doesn't look pretty, nor particularly safe. "This is a little community, there are some 'liveaboards' here, but see how it's kind of empty? That's because of the management. The logs under here are rotting out."

"Here's the reason I am running, is because they built that." His arm points to two newly constructed square buildings on the far corner of the Marina. "They were supposed to put that over there," he adds now pointing in the other direction clear across the marina, where a majority of the boats actually are.

"There is no ramp over here. They face each other so there's no visibility from here to see what's going on. The back one is the shower, and there's only one entrance in and out, so if you were in the shower and there was a fire, how are you going to get out?"



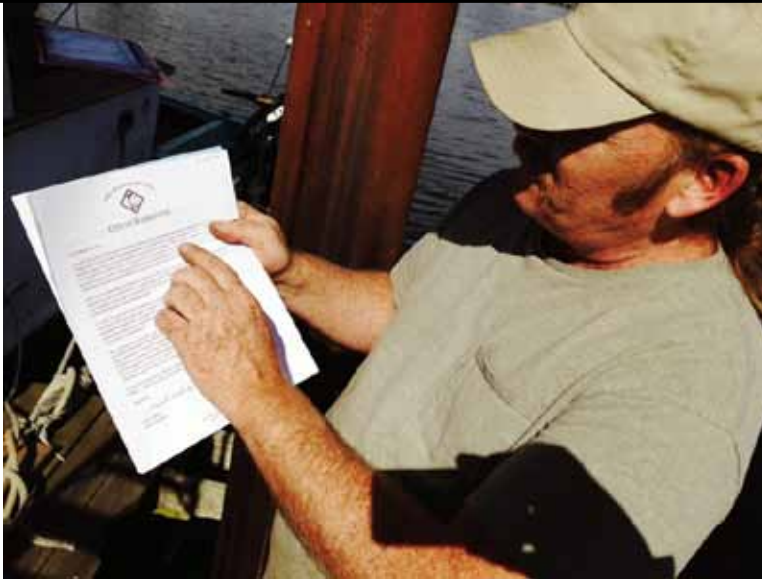
Candidate Richard Frisbee at the Warrenton Marina

PART II: FOUR COMPETE FOR WARRENTON COMMISSION SEAT

By Amy Bugbee

A young man joins us on the pier, he smiles politely.

"This is my son Austin, he's a tenth grader at Warrenton High School, my daughter's in the boat, she graduated high school last year and is going to community college. He has a learning disability and this school has been great, that's the reason I'm here. They have a teacher who runs the special education department here, she's the best. When I brought him here back in third grade he couldn't even write his name, now he's in high school doing high school work. He's also on the junior varsity football team, and that's the reason I'm going to stay, at least until he gets out of school."



Frisbee returns to the problems of the marina, "I've been around the world, I've seen marinas all over the world. Marinas are the docks and if the docks are sinking you don't have a marina anymore! I have a tender on the back of my boat, it's the little boat I use when we anchor out. We have to use it in the winter time to go over to the side to go up to the bathrooms and the shore because these docks are too dangerous, when they freeze you can't walk on them and I need to take my kids to school."

Speaking of the tender, it's another area of issues Frisbee has with the Marina, and more specifically with the Harbor Master. "Here's the kicker, there is a resolution called 2146 which outlines the fees the marina can charge, the Harbor Master cannot just make up a fee because it has to go through public opinion, yet the Harbor Master is illegally charging me \$230 a month to have that boat back there. Part of the city commission is covering up for him and allowing him to do it. I have already gotten money back for all of these people that dock here because the City Manager and the Harbor Master decided to raise the rates even though it wasn't authorized by the City Commission."

Richard's daughter Catherine emerges from the boat with a stack of papers and hands them to her father. He explains what they are, and what they mean. The marina was charging him and others in the marina an "Extra Vessel Fee" to the tune of \$280 per month for the little boat, after some hostility was expressed by a number of liveboarders, the fee changed, it was now called "Warrenton Monthly Mortgage" and went down to \$224.

Frisbee shows me Resolution 2146, it outlines the cost of the vessels as \$23 per foot, the small boat on the back adds what he says is about 6 feet to the length of the boat (in all honesty it does not even look that big), so by the resolution's rules the fee would be much less. He then produces a letter from Kurt Fritsch the City Manager regarding a refund, but the refund the Marina dwellers were finally issued was not really for the extra vessel, it is for the fact that several docks in the marina were to receive a fee hike, instead the entire marina was issued one. Kurt Frisch does say in the letter that the cost of these legitimate refunds will mean "significant reduction in the ability of the Warrenton Marina to make improvements in the same time frame we had hoped".

"I am a very logical person, and I don't say anything unless I am certain," Frisbee says. "This is the reason I am running, I am tired of people being pushed around, I am tired of illegal fees, I am tired of the City Manager and the Harbor Master thinking that if they want to make up a fee they can."

Richard Frisbee has his hands full raising his two children. They have been part of the community of Warrenton for more than seven years now.

A fourth candidate, David Goldthorpe did not return calls for an interview.

Both Pam Ackley and Rick Newton are very active with volunteer programs in the community.

"Most people are not aware of the good in the community I have done", says Newton, and he offers a list. He has participated in the

Lunch Buddy program at Warrenton Grade School, and the Warrenton Fire Department on the food basket program. He was the head of Seaside Elks Lodge, "as a vehicle to do good work", and a prior Elks National Scholarship lodge, and district chair helping 100s of kids further their education. He personally funds two Elks educational scholarships per year, and has worked on Seaside Rotary Student Exchange programs.

He adds, "I would like to see a customer satisfaction survey done for the services the city provides to the residents of Warrenton, implying in no way that our city staff does not take good care of us, but instead to bridge the gap between the city workers and the residents of Warrenton. I would also like to see the area north of the new marina offices leveled, ramped, and planted so it could be used in the same way as the area adjacent to the Hammond marina is used during the summer, bringing in a new \$25,000 more of use fees."

Pam Ackley is a founding co-director for Warrenton-Hammond Healthy Kids, Inc. She explains, "This is the financial arm of the school district which provides for the weekend food back pack program for 95 back packs a week. Our mission is to ensure that every child will have all of the basic core needs met so that while at school all they have to think about is learning and not where their next meal may come from."

She is also active in the Way To Wellville, which assists with needed toiletries, clothes, shoes and wellness needs. "Our biggest fundraiser for the year is the walk-a-thon scheduled for October 22nd at the Warrenton Grade School. This event has raised funds to add sports equipment on the playground including a basketball court, a big screen and sound system for the gym to enhance the physical education needs and provide for special events."

All of the candidates that I spoke with were very involved in the community, passionate about improving Warrenton and maintaining its charm and viability. Of course we again must come back to the candidates' views on LNG.

Pam Akley offers a non-committal response to the question, "It is paramount that all of the folks running for this position and the current commissioners remain objective and study all of the issues on LNG to make decisions that are in the public's best interest."

She offers this on the needs of the community and especially the struggling downtown: "I would like to see more business's sought out for industry that would provide better than minimum wage jobs. We need to manufacture products here. The City and County need to work together to evaluate the inventory of build-able lands and assess the uses for those lands to entice manufacturing jobs to our

community that fit here. Tourism was at its height this year with the most phenomenal sport and commercial season we have seen in 25 years. The families that spent their time here shop in our stores, but downtown Warrenton is left out of that mix, except for the bars and restaurants. I believe we could draw more business to downtown if we took a boutique town approach. We need incentives to clean up the store fronts and invite more service, galleries, and boutique gift stores to the downtown area." She also points out that she would offer a woman's point of view to the City Commission to which it is currently lacking and has been for a long time.

Next is Rick Newton, "The real question is "Is LNG good for Warrenton?" I really don't have enough information about it to make an intelligent decision, and so far I have only found 3 people for it and a lot against. It will create some jobs, but I don't know how well we can live with LNG for the next 100 years. I personally would like to see the gas used to generate cheap electricity and put people to work all over in manufacturing jobs, but I have read that the utilities are reluctant to retrofit or update because the price of natural gas will rocket up once it is being exported. So, until someone can sell me on that it will safely improve the quality of life in Warrenton, I am against it."

Finally, we have Richard Frisbee's thoughts on LNG.



Candidate Rick Newton, Longtime Owner of Napa Auto Parts

here, you go up and there is some property where they ride RVs out on the end. That's where they want to put it, and that property is owned by the Port of Astoria."

"You need a two to five mile blast zone in case they blow out. We are closer than two miles right here." He continues, "They are going to be compressing explosive gases. I worked on the space shuttle for three years in quality control for Lockheed, I've worked with all the rocket fuels and all of that sort of stuff, and you can't put a place that is going to compress explosive gases within two to five miles of a populated area. It is just unsafe! It doesn't matter about environmental, it doesn't matter about anything else, it is just unsafe. As part of the military, the first thing we look at is 'Is this safe?', we don't need to go any further, because it's not."

From the Marina, to the cannery, from a small business owner to a local realtor - there are many views here expressed. There is no lack of passion for the politics and the future of Warrenton, and people willing to steep up to volunteer positions.

"It's amazing what people are doing here, this shouldn't even be going on this long. They want to put it right over there!" he says pointing just over the other side of the marina where an obviously brand new townhouse complex has been built. "Where you go out the Skipanon Rlver

Photos: Amy Bugbee