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Boese, Thurston debate ahead of DA race



Brian Huber/Freeman Staff

Waukesha County Deputy District Attorney Lesli Boese smiles during a Waukesha County district attorney candidates debate organized by the Republican Party of Waukesha County at the party's headquarters on June 19.



Brian Huber/Freeman Staff

Waukesha County Deputy District Attorney Mike Thurston lays out his ideas during a district attorney candidates debate organized by the Republican Party of Waukesha County at the party's headquarters on June 19.

By Brian Huber
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WAUKESHA — Two of the top supervisors in the Waukesha County District Attorney's Office faced off in a debate June 19, laying out their ideas — and where they converged and differed.

Speaking to a meeting room packed to capacity by several dozen residents including local elected officials and candidates at the Republican Party of Waukesha County offices, Deputy District Attorneys Lesli Boese and Mike Thurston agreed that there are no easy answers on stemming the impact of crime coming from Milwaukee County residents, but also threw barbs at each other.

They are running to succeed Sue Oppen, the first female district attorney of Waukesha County, who has announced she is not running for re-

election. Boese and Thurston, both running as Republicans, will appear on the Aug. 13 primary ballot. With no Democratic candidate declared, the primary effectively decides the race.

They answered questions from moderator Kevin Scott on topics ranging from practices and programs within the DA's office, election integrity, crime, leadership, challenges facing the office and the closure of the county Huber facility.

Boese, a lifelong county resident, said she initially had no interest in running but decided to enter the race after another declared candidate, Assistant District Attorney Abbey Nickolice, bowed out, and police officers asked her to run. She said she did so with the county police chiefs' support.



"My platform really is holding people accountable, giving victims a voice and backing the badge. Our law enforcement partners are an essential part of how we do our job," she said.

Thurston said he moved here in 2013 after working and leading sensitive crimes prosecutions in Atlanta and the Milwaukee County DA's office. He said he gained the endorsements of Sheriff Eric Severson and his predecessors Dan Trawicki and Arnie Moncada, as well as the county's police chiefs, "because we fight, fight, fight, fight, fight, fight and that's what we got coming. We've got to have somebody with leadership and experience and I intend to bring that and I've been bringing it my whole career."

See **DEBATE**, PAGE 4

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Courtesy of the National Marine Manufacturers Association

Local residents receive free life jackets at the June 22 Pewaukee Beach Party.

Marine groups partner with Pewaukee to distribute over 200 life jackets to beachgoers

PEWAUKEE — While enjoying the Pewaukee Kiwanis Beach Party on June 22, residents and visitors had the opportunity to receive one of more than 200 free life jackets that the National Marine Manufacturers Association distributed in partnership with Pewaukee Water Patrol and Onyx Outdoor.

“NMMA is proud to partner with local law enforcement and Onyx Outdoor to promote boating safety through our life jacket giveaway program,” said Jesse McArdell, Midwest Policy and Engagement Manager with the NMMA. “By working together, we aim to ensure that everyone on the water has access to essential safe-

ty gear, making boating a safer and more enjoyable experience for all.” Wisconsin law requires children under 13 to wear life jackets when on a boating vessel. Experts were onsite during the distribution to demonstrate proper fitting, as the correct fit is crucial to preventing accidental drownings.



Photo courtesy of Erik Syvertson

Erik Syvertson, owner of EJS Construction and subcontractor on the project to repair and replace cedar shake on Gymlingo's building's steeple, said after he left the job site on Friday, June 14, someone stole \$500 worth of copper.

Copper stolen from Gymlingo steeple construction site

OCONOMOWOC — Replacing the original cedar shake from the steeple that stands on the Gymlingo Academy building, 219 S. Main St., is a hard enough job to begin with, but has gotten a lot harder now that \$500 worth of copper has been stolen from the job site. Erik Syvertson, owner of EJS Construction and subcontractor on the project, said after he left the job site on Friday, June 14, someone stole copper valley, hip and ridge pieces kept on the flat roof of the entrance. He said someone must have climbed up 20 feet to get the copper. “It’s not cheap to get made and I had the exact amount for the job. Now I need to get more made. Super frustrating,” Syvertson said. The project includes tearing off all the original cedar shake and replacing it with all new cedar and copper. Syvertson said he is doing all the roofing by himself and Hartly Exteriors is repainting all the trim and the dormers. The roof, Syvertson said, is around 140 years old. Prior to Gymlingo occupying the South Main Street building, it was the longtime home of St. Jerome Catholic Parish, which built a new church and school on Silver Lake Street. Syvertson said up until the theft, he had spent about 90 hours working on the steeple project with about 40 to 60 hours still needed to complete it.

University Lake School to establish Falk Family Center for Learning Engagement

HARTLAND — After receiving a \$2.75 million gift from Lauren and Michael Falk, University Lake School will establish the Falk Family Center for Learning Engagement. The center is expected to open in the fall and the program will be integrated into ULS’ student experience to cultivate the highest level of learning, according to a news release. The program will provide additional staff members to support students in-house, more resources for children with neurodivergent learning needs and capacities, and professional training for staff and faculty using the most up-to-date research. This program will better serve the learning differences seen in classrooms every day, such as ADHD, anxiety, dyslexia, dyscalculia, speech challenges, and children with twice-exceptional qualities. It will benefit all students in the classroom, including those who are not diagnosed or who have unspecified learning differences, according to the release.



Courtesy of the Hartland Chamber of Commerce

Dough Nation LLC owners accept a membership plaque from the Hartland Chamber of Commerce. Pictured left to right: Mike Gogin, State Farm; Sara Rupnick, Wisconsin Athletic Club – Lake Country; Chris Fanning, Dough Nation LLC; Deb Nollen, Area Welcome and Mary Kay Beauty Consultant; Amy Fanning, Dough Nation LLC; Mary Ebert, Town Bank; and Scott Heyerdahl, First Weber, Premier Partners.

Dough Nation joins Hartland Chamber

HARTLAND — Mobile food truck Dough Nation LLC was recently welcomed into the Hartland Chamber of Commerce. Chris and Amy Fanning started Dough Nation Mini Donuts when they found themselves with spare time on their hands after becoming empty nesters. With their combined passion for food and baking, they found their way into the food truck

business and offer mini donuts by the dozen in a variety of flavors, including the classic cinnamon and sugar. They named their business Dough Nation, because they give a portion of their mini donut sales to local nonprofits, a cause close to Chris’s heart, having worked at a nonprofit for 24 years. They hope to bring mini donuts and joy around all of Lake Country

and beyond, all while making a positive impact on their community. Dough Nation is available to book for events. When not making donuts, Chris works full time in youth ministry, and Amy is an office manager for a local small business. They also enjoy spending time outdoors hiking in Lake Country with their dogs.

Woman finds 26-year-old check nearly 100 miles from storm-struck church

By Bridget Dean
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DOUSMAN — On June 23, Waukesha resident Tammy Zyduck was on an early morning run on the Scuppernong Observation loop in Dousman, when she noticed a paper check right on the edge of the trail. Thinking somebody dropped it, she picked it up. “It was a few miles in the trail, you know. I looked down, and it was just there — perfect,” she said. “I assumed that the person dropped it the night before, and I thought, well, they might come back for it.” The check was in pristine condition, she said. Zyduck decided it would be best to take the check with her and attempt to contact the recipient. It wasn’t until she arrived at work later in the day that she saw the date on the check — June 30, 1998, almost 26 years ago to the day. “I’m like, there’s got to be a story behind this. I didn’t realize that it was signed and endorsed; I didn’t think to look at the back,” she said. Her husband did some internet digging too on the sender of the check, Apple Grove Cemetery Association, and learned that Apple Grove Lutheran Church in Argyle, Wis-

consin, had been completely destroyed by a tornado on Saturday night. Debris and paperwork from the church had inevitably been scattered and blown away. “I still couldn’t really believe it that it went that far and looks so perfect, but it’s really the only explanation,” Zyduck said. “Just the chances of it, the Scuppernong is a thick woods, and the check being right next to the trail where I could see it. ... It being where you could see it was just so coincidental.” Argyle is a village in Lafayette County, and the church is nearly 100 miles from where she found the check in perfect condition. While she’s intrigued that the check had made its way into the woods where she was running, she is saddened by the circumstances. “It sounds like it was a small community, and the church was very important. The fact that it was destroyed is very sad,” Zyduck said. After posting about her find on Facebook, several people began to comment that they were relatives of the man who had written the check. Jeremy Mau, the recipient of the check 26 years ago, commented too. He used to mow the lawn in the cemetery. “I got a little overwhelmed with

everyone trying to message me,” admitted Zyduck. “Jeremy, who the check is made out to, did say, ‘I remember that check, and I loved mowing the lawn there.’” Zyduck isn’t sure what she’s going to do with the check yet, since so many people have connections to it. She’d like to keep her find, but said if it really did mean a lot to somebody, she would consider giving it to them. “Honestly, I kind of feel like the odds of me finding it are so great. ... It seems like there’s several different people that it means a lot to, so it’s like, also who would I choose?” she said. “I thought I would over the next couple of days maybe connect with them and just kind of see from there.”



Courtesy of Tammy Zyduck

The 26-year-old check was found alongside the Scuppernong Observation loop in Dousman by Waukesha resident Tammy Zyduck in perfect condition except for its dampness.

Kids mow ill neighbor’s lawn for free

5 boys were seeking to earn money by cutting grass

By Karen Pilarski
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MUKWONAGO — Armed with lawn mowers, a catchy business name and a mission, five boys in Mukwonago looking to make a buck ended up making someone’s day instead.

Bonita Hansen of Mukwonago noticed a group of boys walking around her neighborhood on July 1. She caught a glimpse of them walking past her yard, which was freshly cut.

“I was out in the driveway and thought, ‘Is this a parade or something?’” Hansen said.

There were two high school aged boys and the rest looked like they were in middle school. They had a slow traffic sign like you would find on a tractor or truck.

“They had it all rigged up on a tricycle or cart. They had a guy riding the lawn mower. There was another person pushing a lawn mower. I wondered what was going on,” she said.

She overheard one the kids tell the other one “Remember to say \$35. It is 3-5.” The resident wondered what they were gearing up to do.

“I saw them knock on my neighbor’s door. I thought she wasn’t going to answer it. She was diagnosed with cancer recently and I know she has been going through chemo. I thought she was either sleeping or not home since she would probably be at the hospital,” Hansen said.

The neighbor’s lawn was long and she walked over to the boys and asked if they were mowing lawns. Hansen told them she wanted to pay them to cut her neighbor’s lawn due to her being sick.

“They told me they were going to cut the grass for free. I thought that was so sweet. They started unloading their stuff. One of the boys said to the other they needed to do a really good job then,” she said.

It didn’t take long for the boys to finish the job. To thank them for their kind-



Courtesy of Bonita Hansen

Bonita Hansen of Mukwonago noticed a group of boys walking around her neighborhood asking to mow lawns for money. They cut her neighbor’s grass for free after hearing she was sick.

ness she offered them a tip of \$20.

She started doing other chores at home and looked back outside to find no signs of the boys.

Hansen didn’t recognize the youngsters but guessed they must be from a nearby neighborhood. She asked them who they were and remembers one them was named “Max.”

They called themselves The Yardigans, a play on the Nickelodeon show “The Backyardigans.”

Hansen posted on social media hoping to find out who the kids were.

She remembered her children doing similar things when they were younger.

“My kids tried to mow people’s grass and had hand mowers. They gave up because it was really hard. They had a business for a day. They tried so that was cute,” she said.

Her daughters also did lemonade stands, which she still sees from time to time.

Hansen said there are people in Mukwonago who would gladly pay entrepreneurial kids to cut the grass or complete other yardwork.

She is grateful that the mysterious kids did something kind for a community member in need.



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L I N C O L N

Debate

From Page 1

He said he'd seek to have "three hardened trial prosecutors" in management positions to be able to prosecute hard cases with experience and compassion. He said he wanted to see the DA's office get more engaged with the community, like the local Republican Party, schools and faith communities.

Boese, in addressing what she would change in her first year, said it's hard to say what changes would happen quickly but "No. 1 is holding people accountable," something really important in handling the influx of people from Milwaukee County committing crimes here.

When asked what set them apart, the candidates touted their experience. In her 29 years in the office, Boese said, she's worked in traffic cases, misdemeanors, felonies, white collar crimes, domestic and sensitive crimes cases and has led the drug unit in the DA's office for eight years. "That's experience I have that my opponent does not have and therefore I think that makes me the better candidate for the position," she said.

Thurston also touted his experience, particularly in trials, saying that should be the metric people use in selecting the next top prosecutor in the county. He hammered Boese on her record over the past 10 years, saying she's tried 17 cases to his 84. She later said that number was closer to 40 as Thurston did not count cases where she appeared for others at times.

"I will get after it, I will continue to get after it. Not only that my managers will be trial attorneys," he said. "I want my team to know that I am not afraid to get out there and try it and that's the quality I am looking for in them is that fearlessness."

When asked how their experience will make them good leaders, Thurston said, "Having a team of managers who are grizzled in service of you. That's how I see leadership." He said he was elected president of a statewide prosecutors group that pressed the state to add 65 new prosecutor positions, 2.5 of them here in Waukesha.

Boese replied she was the first promotion, to deputy DA, made by Oppen, because Oppen trusted her in that position due to her experience. She also supervised interns while maintaining her own case load, and started a domestic violence fast-track program with a state grant that has since expired, she said. She added she's appeared in Oppen's stead at various meetings of county bodies, and said those other obligations a DA has means one can try all the cases they want, but would neglect their duties if those other needs were not met.

Boese said a big challenge facing the office is the people from Milwaukee County committing crimes in Waukesha County. Another challenge, she said, is staffing levels — the office has less staff now than when she started, she



Brian Huber/Freeman Staff

Waukesha County Deputy District Attorneys Lesli Boese and Mike Thurston, both supervisors in the DA's office, appeared at a district attorney candidates debate organized by the Republican Party of Waukesha County, addressing several dozen citizens that filled a meeting room to capacity at the party's headquarters on June 19.

said. With a goal of one prosecutor per 10,000 people in a county, Waukesha has 23 prosecutors when it should have 41, she said. That gets addressed by pressuring legislators to make funding available.

She said holding people accountable will send a message so that drug dealers, "the domestic violence, the sexual assaults, the robberies, the burglaries we prosecute and hold people accountable, maybe they don't cross over 124th Street into our community."

Thurston agreed on the staffing levels. He said when he arrived here, he saw a domestic violence unit that saw fewer cases prosecuted as victims recanted or refused to come to court, and "over time we've been able to get after that."

Attacking records

Thurston said under Boese the drug unit has a massive backlog, 103 uncharged cases stretching back to 2019, where his sensitive crimes unit has no backlog. "We are understaffed, but if you gotta take work home or do it in the evenings or whatever, but when we talk about accountability you gotta get your own cases charged."

Boese said that drug cases take time in working with informants. But she also hit back, saying in the past 10 years, Thurston had 32% of his caseload amended from felonies to misdemeanors and another 20% dismissed, where her caseload saw 2 percent amended from felonies

to misdemeanors and about 11% dismissed.

Addressing the closure of the Huber jail, Boese said she wasn't going to attack Severson for his decisions, as the jail is his to manage, where Thurston sought a more collaborative approach, saying, "these problems that affect the sheriff's department affect us."

On bail reform, Thurston said he was part of the team that worked to get a constitutional amendment passed in the state, testifying twice in Madison after state Rep. Cindi Duchow asked him how a man in a child sex case could be freed on bail. But he said it could go further, saying the state could make its no-bail provision more workable to hold suspects without bail when appropriate. Boese said the bail reform was good but didn't go far enough in defining violent crimes, citing fentanyl being a leading cause of death among younger people, but not considered a violent crime under the statute.

She also said truth in sentencing was giving way to policies under Gov. Tony Evers that allow inmates to serve shorter sentences if they participate in prison programs.

Boese said fighting crime comes down to holding people accountable and more aggressively prosecuting lower-level offenses to stop people from committing worse crimes. "We need to be more aggressive in charging the little stuff in hoping it doesn't add up to the big stuff," she said.

View the debate online

A video of the debate is available at: bit.ly/GOPDADebate

Thurston replied, "You keep talking about holding offenders accountable ... and fact is, Attorney Boese hasn't. She's got 103 cases under review since 2019, 2020, 2021, so OK, you gotta charge them. Start by charging your own to hold these folks accountable. ... That's what I envision ... I want warriors who are hungry for it to get after it. That's how you set the tone."

Both prosecutors said election integrity was important. But where Thurston called for a specially trained assistant to investigate such cases, Boese said the buck stops with the elected DA who should have that training

already.

Boese also hammered Thurston about his donations to his former boss Milwaukee County DA John Chisholm. "While (Thurston) has been living and working in Waukesha County, 4 of those 5 donations that he made to John Chisholm happened then. ... I do not agree with John Chisholm's policies, I don't agree with what he is doing and they do not belong in Waukesha County," she said. "Every candidate he's donated to has been a Democrat except for the month of Sue's announcement she was not going to be running ... I looked throughout the United States, that's

the first time he donated to the Republican Party or a Republican candidate."

Thurston admitted his donations, saying Chisholm has been a "major disappointment."

"Yes I did donate to John Chisholm, I hoped for better and we haven't gotten it. What I will say is my philosophy is exactly the opposite of John Chisholm's."

Afterward, Terry Dittrich, chairman of the party, said, "The forum tonight was a perfect example of civic engagement by the people of Waukesha. Folks from all over the county came tonight to be educated on local issues and what's going to happen with their DA," he said. "This is a perfect example of our republic, the greatness of America that average citizens can run and average citizens can participate in the civic process in their local communities."



Brian Huber/Freeman Staff

Waukesha County Deputy District Attorneys Lesli Boese and Mike Thurston, far right, and moderator Kevin Scott greet audience members at the start of a debate between candidates for district attorney at the Republican Party of Waukesha County headquarters on June 19.



Brian Huber/Freeman Staff

Several dozen people, including local elected officials and candidates, filled a meeting room at the Republican Party of Waukesha County's headquarters to hear a debate between district attorney candidates Lesli Boese and Mike Thurston on June 19.

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Waukesha County
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