



Rowland Finally Shows Up at a Public Event

High Prairie Business Womens' Group Hosts a Candidates Forum

By William C. Thomas

High Prairie Business Womens' Group hosted a Candidates Forum during their Luncheon Meeting on Friday, October 12, 2012 at the Elizabeth Library. The forum, allowed candidates 5 minutes to introduce themselves and explain to the 14 attendees what they deemed the most important in the issues confronting the County. That then was followed by answering questions from the audience.

Candidate Jill Duvall, went first outlining her qualifications and experience as a small business owner, founder of ECOGIG, member of the Fair Board, her service on the County's Oil and Gas Regulation Committee, 4-H, and as a school teacher in Kiowa and Elizabeth. She explained that County regulations for oil and gas should be more stringent than those of the State in order to insure water quality. As a solution to County problems with the budget, she proposed public/private solutions for the Compactor; a water recycling plant near Agate and adequate taxation of facilities in the County, such as the permanent gas pipeline which the BOCC had previously decided not to tax. She also mentioned that the County is not collecting sales and use taxes on the wind generation plants on its eastern end; there is currently no assessment made on permanent installations such as machinery brought into the County; and since the Assessor's Office staff has been severely cut, less revenue has been brought into the coffers. Duvall also questioned why County employees were driving County vehicles and why \$30,000.00 was paid to attorneys in March for the Compactor issue.

"The budget is a bipartisan issue and there needs to be a Citizens Review Committee to overlook finances," she added. This Citizens Review Committee would be supplemented by a quarterly Business Roundtable at which "County and Town Businesses could work together for our mutual good."

Lark Fogel, representing District 3, then took the chair and wondered why her opponent, Larry Ross, "equates transparency with disappearing." No one explained Ross' absence to the audience, and Fogel wondered whether Ross was counting on being elected because there was an R behind his name. "That's what gotten us into this mess as a County," she said, "because a one-sided party has not handled the budget right."

A small business owner and an independent attorney, Fogel took out a Small Business Administration loan in 1994 to establish herself. She has a practice in Kiowa and in El Paso, Texas. She does not represent any business in Elbert County and can act without any perceived conflict of interest.

Stressing personal responsibility as a way of life in which she believes, the obligations for roads, protection, and needed services is the role of government.

"There's a reason for Conservatism in this County because



A question from the floor regarded Larry Ross' suspended driver's license and his fitness to hold elected office, to which Fogel replied that "alcoholism is a disease, and it's to his credit that he has overcome it, but look at his past behavior. He smoked marijuana for his back problems," Fogel asserted, "and he was caught with it in his possession. He was caught driving with a suspended license," Fogel said. "He did that consciously and he's had 4 convictions. Will he decide the law is irrelevant again? A Commissioner takes an oath to follow the law."

Although Duvall and Fogel both followed the time rules, Robert Rowland, spoke well over the allotted time limit, which only allowed time for one question from the floor. He was greeted warmly by Fogel and Duvall, who both mentioned that he'd been absent from three previous public forums.

Rowland began by saying that he was not exactly "the golden boy" of the Republican Party and that he ran against the "good 'ol boy" network in the Primary. He enjoys running against Duvall more than when running against Schwab. He said he believed in principle over party and he is a graduate, this year, of the Leadership Program of the Rockies, which is accredited through Colorado Christian University.

He founded the Elbert County Tea Party in April, 2010 and believes in the principles of small government, constitutional government, liberty, and freedom.

He said he was the only one of the candidates: Ross, Duvall, and Fogel, to attend all the budget meetings, which he estimated were 10 total, and he said the County estimate after all the budget cutting and targets was still \$723,000.00 more than had been targeted. He said there would not be enough in the fund for payroll in January and February, 2013.

He will take a businesslike approach to every decision. One of the very few specific problems or solutions Rowland provided to the group was that he will hire more personnel for the Assessors Office. He boasted that he had supervised the

most of you believe in that. So do I."

She stressed that the ideas of a monolithic BOCC would not solve problems if it hasn't already, using Kiowa's water problem as an example. Fogel contacted the Receiver for Kiowa's water who had hiked the rates up, using all the addresses in the Kiowa zip code, which made an average of \$40,000.00/yr income. Fogel pointed out that the Town of Kiowa, where the water rates have been imposed, had a much smaller average household income and managed to insure Kiowa's water supply "so they can water their lawns now."

Endorsing the idea of recycling water, Fogel said that an entire business could be built from it, with the byproducts going to industrial use. She believes that previous BOCCs had waived fees for businesses in order to attract them to the County, which she could understand, "but Lincoln and Washington Counties haven't done that and they still attract business." Pointing out that a "different voice" as County Commissioner could be an advantage to the County, Fogel said she understood litigation and how expensive it is, suggesting that it could be limited severely, thereby saving the County a great deal of money.

building of large projects in his years with newspapers and always brought the projects in under budget, although he did not go into any tangible specifics.

While "water is clearly the biggest issue," Rowland said, he promised to tackle many issues.

In response to the only public question from the floor allowed in the time remaining, Rowland responded that he could work with others because he represented management for 9 years negotiating labor contracts, is a consensus builder, and relates to people at their level.

He passed out a spreadsheet of fund balances and an announcement of the 2nd Elbert County Business Roundtable, which will be held on October 18 at 4:00 at Guadalajara's Restaurant. He also had available copies of The Prairie Times, which has an endorsement of him by Bob Shaffer, head of the Leadership Institute, with a photo of Rowland taken by New-Plains.com (and used without permission).

At the close of the event, Moderator Janet Wilson thanked the candidates, who remained behind to answer questions.