

LOCAL

Meet the candidates: H2GO Brunswick Regional Water & Sewer Board of Commissioners



Jamey Cross

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Three candidates are running for the H2GO Brunswick Regional Water & Sewer Board of Commissioners.

Two incumbents -- Steve Hosmer and Barry Laub -- are vying for their current seats, but newcomer Joanna Levitan is eyeing one for herself.

Early voting begins Oct. 19 and ends Nov. 4. Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 7.

The race is nonpartisan. Here are the candidates and their thoughts on some pressing issues.

Candidate responses have been edited for style, grammar and length.

Steve Hosmer

Age: 76

Occupation: Software Systems Sales, Consulting, Customization and Training

Family: Wife; two sons; three grandsons; three rescue dogs

Education: Mechanical Engineering Graduate – University of Pennsylvania

Political affiliation: Independent

Barry Laub

Age: Did not answer

Occupation: Retired

Family: Two adult children, four grandchildren

Education: Master's degree: Psychology; Master's degree: Special Education; Certified Financial Planner; Chartered Special Needs Consultant; Business Administration

Political affiliation: Unaffiliated

Joanne Levitan

Age: 66

Occupation: Retired; 26 years testing computer software

Family: Spouse; One stepson

Education: BA Economics Goucher College; MBA, Information Systems NYU Stern School of Business

Political affiliation: Brunswick County Water and Sewer H2GO Commissioner is a non-partisan position

What is your campaign platform?

Hosmer: In my four years as an H2GO commissioner, together we have grown H2GO from a modest reseller of less-than-healthy river water serving 28,000 people, to a primary supplier of contaminant-free, aquifer water serving over 40,000 people with the lowest priced water in our area. With much more growth to come, I will focus on readiness for increased demand, reliability and resilience, improving professionalism at H2GO, improved facility security, community involvement and cost control.

Laub: My campaign platform is very simple: Promises Made—Promises Kept. Over the past 3.5 years I have worked on delivering on the promises that I made during the last campaign. I promised the voters that I would see to it that we would build a reverse osmosis plant built that would deliver aquifer sourced contaminant free drinking water. Overcoming many circumstantial obstacles, the job was accomplished. Today the

entire customer base receives the cleanest water that can be produced. The plant was built without raising customer rates. No idle campaign rhetoric. Promises made, promises kept.

Levitan: If elected, I will be the first Brunswick Forest resident to serve on the board and I plan to represent all the 40,000 ratepayers who count on H2GO for their water and sewer services. I will expand consumer advocacy and build on the board's efforts to emphasize the importance of water conservation in our community. I will support past efforts by the board to address nonpayment issues with empathy and compassion and keep water rates affordable. And I will make sure Chemours — not taxpayers — pay 100% of the costs to clean the pollution it created in regional water supplies.

What makes you qualified to serve as commissioner of a water and sewer utility?

Hosmer: Four years of on-the-job Commissioner experience guiding H2GO's successful transition to a clean, aquifer water supplier serving 40,000 people. I am a mechanical engineer with decades of business, technology and contract experience. In the 18 months before winning my election for commissioner, I learned the business by researching and writing nearly 150 public comments challenging the existing board's desire to dissolve H2GO, forever destroying our hope of getting healthy, aquifer water. Once elected, I developed the overall strategy that lead to removal of the legal hurdles blocking completion of the aquifer-sourced reverse osmosis project.

Laub: I bring a diverse set of business competencies. I have 3 1/2 years of on-the-job training as an H2GO board commissioner and vice chair. I have been an integral part of the team in the development of the Reverse Osmosis plant. My knowledge of all aspects of the company makes me an effective participant in delivering strategic input to benefit the present and long-range planning needs of H2GO. I have been a school administrator, teacher, trainer and business coach. I have taught leadership and effective communication skills in my prior life.

Levitan: I have a BA in Economics and an MBA in Information Systems, I have the business skills necessary to oversee H2GO operations. I also have experience as a community advocate. I have for the past several years been active in the community, using my communications skills to help my neighbors understand issues our community faces. If

elected, I will review and advocate for an improved communications program, providing factual and timely information on our activities and policies. Transparency is my goal.

How does the growth occurring in northern Brunswick County impact H2GO?

Hosmer: Rapid growth requires early planning and completion of new infrastructure components before current system capacities are overwhelmed. H2GO has already structured its current water system to accommodate expansion easily. By improving the efficiency of a newly acquired sewer system, H2GO has put the need for additional wastewater treatment capacity farther into the future. By adding an Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) system, H2GO will soon move the need for more expensive additional water processing capacity farther into the future. Pushing major infrastructure upgrades farther into the future keeps water prices down.

Laub: H2GO has been proactive in planning water and wastewater infrastructure improvements. The newly commissioned reverse osmosis water plant is a prime example of that forward thinking. H2GO's planning over the past 5-10 years has been to accommodate today's growth, and today's planning is focused on additional infrastructure improvements to accommodate growth over the next 10 to 15 years. Our pro-active approach will ensure that growth impacts are managed; that future water and sewer needs are met; that existing infrastructure is well maintained; and that we continue to build and maintain resilient water and sewer systems.

Levitan: In a time of growth and change in our community, residents deserve representatives on the H2GO board who will speak for and with them. Our area, already the county's fastest-growing region, will continue to attract more residents and commerce in the coming years. But growth can't come at the expense of clean water supplies or adequate sewer capacity. We must work positively and effectively with other jurisdictions — including the Brunswick County government — to make sure commercial and residential development doesn't outstrip our infrastructure or our clean water supply.

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Jamey Cross covers Brunswick County for the StarNews. Reach her at jbcross@gannett.com or message her on Twitter/X @jameybcross.