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Six vie for 44th District House of Delegates seats

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BY TRACY EDDY

The Dominion Post

Six candidates are competing for four seats representing the 44th District in the state House of Delegates.

Delegates Bob Beach, Barbara Evans Fleischauer, Charlene Marshall and Alex Shook, all Democrats, are seeking re-election.

Republicans Harry Bertram and Cindy Frich are looking to

defeat the incumbents. Frich previously served a term in the House of Delegates from 2002-'06, and Bertram has never held office before.

Each person elected on Nov. 4 will serve a two-year term in the House.

The Dominion Post asked the candidates questions about their positions on some of the issues this year.

Q: After last spring's Heather Bresch/WVU scandal, many said the problem started with

how the university's Board of Governors is constituted. The governor appoints 12 of the 16 BOG members and some say the governor should be naming far fewer members to the board. Do you think that the BOG needs to be reformed? Why or why not, and what do you propose?

Beach said he would "wholeheartedly support" a change in the BOG selection process, and would ask the state Senate to conduct a stronger confirmation process.

"Presently the Senate Confirmation Committee meets on a sporadic basis to confirm BOG appointees, leaving little time to properly review and give serious consideration to each and every candidate submitted by the governor," he said.

Beach said an independent review panel should be created, and the panel would review all applications and give the governor three names from which to chose his appointment. Also, those

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three applicants should be required to submit financial disclosures and meet certain ethical standards.

Bertram said he does believe the BOG needs to be reformed.

"Because there have been problems before, problems are probably going to arise again," he said. "There's a better way to do things."

Bertram said the selection process for the BOG needs to be looked at. Selection should be done more within the university, and done without the use of political connections.

"We need to take the power away from the governor," Bertram said. "Break up the buddy system, so to speak, and give the responsibility to the people of WVU. Faculty voices should be weighed heavily into the BOG's decisions."

Fleischauer said the House delegation has been looking at how boards of governors or boards of trustees are selected in other states to determine what selection process would best fit West Virginia.

"We hope to have legislation to introduce more merit-based selection process, so we can have people on the board who are very, very well-qualified," Fleischauer said.

One way to get highly-qualified people on the BOG, is to have a selection committee of experts on higher education, and that selection committee could make recommendations to the governor concerning who should be appointed.

Frich said the Bresch/WVU scandal was "symptomatic of the corruption, cronyism and nepotism in West Virginia's state government."

She said she was willing to work with the university faculty and the state's Higher Education Policy Commission to determine the best selection process for the BOG.

Frich said she would like to see more than one WVU faculty member on the BOG, because she believes that the faculty needs more of a voice in the board's dealings. She also thinks that all board members should be free of political ties, and placed upon the board based on their merit.

Marshall said she's involved in discussions about revamping the makeup of the BOG, which began this spring.

"Perhaps the time has come for a change in the BOG in the same way that changes happen over the course of time," Marshall said.

One of the changes she suggested was to decrease the number of appointments the governor is able to make to the BOG.

Marshall said a more diverse group of people interested in WVU should have input on who is appointed to the BOG.

Shook said he would like to see

Robert 'Bob' Beach

PARTY: Democrat
AGE: 49

RESIDENCE: Morgantown



Robert Beach

FAMILY: Wife, Rachel; children, Jennifer, Melanie, Courtney, Robert and Samuel

EDUCATION: Fair-

mont State University, Ashford University and Spruce School of Real Estate

POLITICAL EXPERIENCE:

House of Delegates, nine years; Monongalia County Planning Commission, 10 years

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: Executive director of the Garrett College Founda-

tion

Cindy Frich

PARTY: Republican
AGE: 48

RESIDENCE: Morgantown



Cindy Frich

EDUCATION: B.A., Miami University in Ohio; post graduate, WVU

FAMILY: Single, with two

dogs and cats

POLITICAL EXPERIENCE:

Former member of the House of Delegates (44th), 2003-2006; state Republican Executive Committee (13th), 1998-2010; Republican National Convention Delegate, 2004

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: Writer, sales

Q: The State Road Fund is no longer even in a position to play catch-up with the maintenance and need for new roads in West Virginia. What do you propose to supplement the State Road Fund's declining revenues? For example, would you be in favor of dedicating a percentage of any state

Harry V. Bertram

PARTY: Republican

AGE: 48

RESIDENCE: Westover



Harry Bertram

FAMILY: Declined to provide
EDUCATION: High school graduate, 1.5 years of technical college

POLITICAL

EXPERIENCE: Activist, has never held office

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: Locomotive engineer

Charlene Marshall

PARTY: Democrat

AGE: 74

RESIDENCE: Ashton Place



Charlene Marshall

EDUCATION: High school graduate, attended Bluefield State College

FAMILY: Children, Gwendolyn, Rogers Jr. and Larry

POLITICAL EXPERIENCE: Mayor of Morgantown, seven years; House of Delegates, eight years

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: Retired data technician

Department of Highways wouldn't have to request supplemental funding each quarter.

Bertram said one answer to beefing up the State Road Fund is filling it with budget surpluses, and another is cutting back on government's spending altogether.

"The government spends money wastefully and I'm against that because it's taking away from the people," Bertram said. "The government only needs to spend money on the basic functional needs for people."

New roadways and maintenance for existing ones would be among those basic needs, he said.

Fleischauer said the first step in solving the problem with the strapped State Road Fund is figuring out exactly how much money is

Barbara Evans Fleischauer

PARTY: Democrat

AGE: 55

RESIDENCE: Bakers Ridge



Barbara Evans Fleischauer

EDUCATION: B.A., Allegheny College; J.D., WVU School of Law

FAMILY: Husband, Bob; children, Rob

and Sarah

POLITICAL EXPERIENCE: House of Delegates, 12 years

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: Attorney, small business owner

Alex Shook

PARTY: Democrat

AGE: 39

RESIDENCE: Morgantown



Alex Shook

EDUCATION: B.A. in psychology and M.S. in industrial and labor relations, WVU, J.D., WVU School of Law

FAMILY: Wife, Alicia
POLITICAL EXPERIENCE: House of Delegates, two years

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: Attorney

"It doesn't have to be supplemental," she said. "It could be in the budget before we vote for it."

Frich said she's not opposed to putting a percentage of budget surpluses in the State Road Fund, but she thinks it would be "preferable" to allot a specific amount to the fund to begin with.

Marshall said she was "definitely not" in favor of an increase in fees for licenses and permit to fill the State Road Fund.

"There are so many individuals in this state without jobs or making minimum wage," she said. "We have the citizens paying so much as it is."

university faculty members, the state Higher Education Policy Commission and current and past members of the BOG have input on who is appointed to the board.

"When you can have one person, no matter who that person is, appoint 75 percent of a board, well, that can certainly lend itself to a problem," Shook said.

He said a change should be made in order to prevent some of the problems the flagship university has had in the past because of what some people saw as a "stacked" BOG.

The number of appointments of faculty members and WVU alumni should be increased, which is one of the changes the legislature is considering, Shook said.

budget surpluses to go into the State Road Fund or an increase in fees for licenses and permits?

Beach said the state should consider developing a Road Building Authority.

"The RBA would act similarly in scope and mission as the present School Building Authority, and its objective would be to determine whether a potential new road project merits funding," he said.

Beach said funding for new road projects would be funded through the RBA using general revenues each year. That would allow all regular maintenance projects to be funded exclusively through present federal funding, state fees and gasoline taxes, meaning the state

needed for the fund.

"I'm not against setting aside a portion of the surplus, but I think we need more information," she said. "I do think there's a problem, and I'm very supportive of figuring out the best way to deal with that problem."

The DOH's lack of money is probably related to the recent increase in gas prices, Fleischauer said, and is something that probably affecting state agencies across the board.

"It's not the only issue we need to look at," she said.

Frich said that she would rather see general revenue allocated to the State Road Fund in the beginning, rather than wait around to put a percentage of any budget surpluses in the fund.

Marshall said using a small percentage of budget surpluses for the State Road Fund is a "viable" option to cover the cost of road maintenance and new roadways.

Shook said depositing a percentage of state budget surpluses in the State Road Fund is something that could be considered, as well as raising fees for licenses and permits.

Another option is to attract private investors to contribute to the State Road Fund, he said.

Shook said the investors would help complete and construct the necessary highways or bridges in exchange for being allowed to collect tolls on those areas of the roadways.