

# Spokesman endorsements: West, Akervall and Linville are best choices for Wilsonville

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## These three candidates will keep Wilsonville on track while providing some diversity of thought

### Wilsonville is in good hands.

That is the prevailing sentiment we came away with after interviewing each of the six candidates for mayor and City Council. There are no bad choices in this bunch, which was comforting despite making our decisions about who to endorse that much more difficult. For years, Wilsonville has enjoyed a reputation for quiet, stable government — and that doesn't look like it will change after this election. One need only look a few miles to the north in West Linn to see why that is so important.

This is, nonetheless, a transitional election for Wilsonville. After 11 years, Mayor Tim Knapp will step aside due to the new term limits that were passed by voters earlier this year. And two incumbents — Joann Linville and Kristin Akervall — are also running for reelection, which means the council could look dramatically different come January of next year.

We don't believe that type of change is necessary, though our choice for mayor will likely bring a different approach than that of Knapp.

Though both candidates are highly qualified and boast unique strengths, we see Ben West as the best choice to lead the city into the future.

West has pleasantly surprised us since he joined the council after the 2018 election, when we did not endorse him. Despite being on the wrong end of numerous 4-1 votes on a largely unified council, he has been professional and collaborative with his fellow councilors. And in a few of those votes, we feel he raised legitimate points — like when the council did not appoint John Budiao to fill Susie Stevens' seat even though Budiao had just barely missed out on winning a seat in 2018, or on the numerous occasions when the council has devoted significant resources to fighting new additions at an airport that is outside city limits.

More importantly, West has distinguished himself as a leading figure in the community. There's evidence to suggest he was more proactive than the rest of the council on small business relief when the pandemic first hit, and he has also shown he can be a champion of the community through his Wilsonville Wednesdays YouTube series and Villebois fire relief efforts. The council could also benefit from the diversity of thought that West has shown as a councilor.

We do, however, have some reservations about West causing dysfunction if he doesn't get his way as mayor, and some of his aggressive remarks on social media are also cause for concern. He needs to tone it down and be an inclusive rather than divisive leader, and we will be watching closely if he wins the seat. [They are [speaking about these comments.](#)]

West has demonstrated his capacity for independent thought on a number of occasions, so we see little reason to worry about PAC campaign contributions influencing his decisions.

Julie Fitzgerald is a fine candidate in her own right, and Wilsonville would be in very capable hands under her leadership as well. She served four years on the council, from 2012-16, and has an impressive career background in fundraising for major organizations like the Oregon Zoo Foundation. Ultimately, we felt that West brought more concrete and specific ideas to the table for how to address Wilsonville's most pressing issues. This was a difficult choice.

Our decisions for City Council were easier, despite the impressive field of candidates. In the end, we saw no reason for either Linville or Akervall to lose their seats.

We've been impressed with how quickly Linville has acclimated to her role after being appointed just over a year ago. She's established effective working relationships with the entire council, including West, and

we admire her willingness to be critical of the city at times. She comes prepared for every council meeting and has a strong sense for what Wilsonville should prioritize moving forward. She deserves a full term.

Akervall, meanwhile, brings an empathetic mindset along with her background as a data analyst. She is a good listener, and seems to genuinely care about public process and input. We do hope that if she earns a second term, she can find more opportunities to speak her mind and not follow the consensus of the rest of the council.

The two remaining candidates, Imran Haider and John Budiao, are both strong but simply did not rise to the top of our list.

A promising new voice, Haider is absolutely right when he points to his Pakistani-American heritage and says voters need to walk the walk when it comes to diversity. Wilsonville needs many more of its underrepresented voices to step up in the coming years, and we admire Haider for his effort. He also brings impressive experience as both a teacher and a business owner, and we appreciate his commitment to keep ideology out of a non-partisan position. In the end, we believe he just needs more experience before joining the council, and we hope he finds other ways to get involved if he is not elected.

Budiao is a good man whose commitment to service should be lauded. He's practical and has some excellent experience — including managing budgets for the Air Force. He deserved more consideration when the council was evaluating possible appointments for Stevens' seat in 2018. But in this race, we simply don't see enough reason for Budiao to unseat either Akervall or Linville.

This is a pivotal election in Wilsonville. More than anything, we ask this: Please vote.

— *Spokesman Editorial Board*