

Election Day

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The victory would be short-lived. In addition to statewide redistricting, Dunwell's term ended within the next year. When he finished the legislative session, it was off to the campaign trail, another season of door knocking, canvassing and stump speeches. While it may seem agonizing for some, Dunwell embraces it.

Campaigning might be the part of the process he likes most, as exemplified by his many on-the-trail selfies posted online. He enjoys being able to go door-to-door and remembering the stories he was told at past visits; many of them, Dunwell says, are not regularly attending Republican Party meetings.

"You never stop campaigning though," he says. "Campaigning is an expression of the office. If I win, and I plan on winning, what I will spend the next couple months doing is focusing on connecting, once again, with my constituents and having coffee roundtables around discussions I'm going to have to deal with."

Election Day is the culmination of the efforts made by each candidate. After three years of work, Dunwell is looking for affirmation from the community that they want him to continue to represent them. The Republican lawmaker wants to have a voice, an influence, in legislation, the Iowa House and his fellow party.

"Being a part of the conversation of our agenda," he says. "Part of me has really been focused upon really looking beyond this moment, to potentially what next year looks. I campaigned and did all the things that are necessary. People know me. They got a taste of who I am and what I'm about. It's now in their hands."

8:07 a.m. — Pam Olson takes it easy the second time running

For the next few hours, Pam Olson would not be thinking about the county board of supervisors election. There was a more important matter to attend to: looking after a family friend's 6-month-old baby. Little Mason was wide awake by the time he was snuggled up to Olson and watching "Comelon" on Netflix.

While colorful characters sang gleeful tunes on a widescreen, Mason bounced up and down on Olson's lap and grinned through two puffy cheeks. Eventually Olson would have to hand Mason off to his grandmother so she could go to work, another distraction

to keep Olson's mind off the race.

Olson ran for a supervisors seat before in 2018. Compared to then, she is less stressed about the whole thing. That year was difficult for other reasons, too. Her husband, Mike Olson, died at their home in July 2018, about a month after the primaries. Olson was left to grieve and run a campaign.

"I'm a lot calmer this year," she says. "I realized I'm going to be the same person on Wednesday that I was on Tuesday. I'll either help serve the citizens of Jasper County or their choice will be somebody else. It's not going to defeat me, or deflate me. You know what I mean? I still get to see this face every morning."

Mason looked at Olson with a wide-eyed expression and bounced his arms in agreement. That morning she was hopeful and believed she could bring a lot of good to the county, especially having worked in the engineer's office for a number of decades. Still, at the same time she was guarded.

The sting of defeat had been felt once before, but Olson refused to let that wound fester into jaded cynicism. She had hope Democrats would find their victories. Olson even looked at fellow Democrat, Bev Price, and felt she might have a better chance of winning over herself.

"But, like I say, I'm not going to be devastated if I don't win," Olson says.

10:17 a.m. — Bev Price believes people will vote for a person over party

Bev Price was easing her nerves with a strong cup of tea and a conversation with friend Pat Wallace inside Uncle Nancy's Coffee House. The more sips she took, the more at peace she became. Price has experience running for an elected office. She ran for school board in years past, but she was unopposed.

"There was very little stress back then," she said. "Periodically I have felt stressed (about this election). More so to just make sure to do what I promised and to keep the campaign clean. We were always going to rise above the fray and comments and the political-ness of it all."

With three other candidates vying for a supervisors seat this time around, the likelihood of a top finish had dropped drastically from her race for school board. Still, Price is confident she has something to offer Jasper County, and she is ready to serve. Ultimately, it is up to the voters to decide, she says.

To her, the supervisors position is not a political position, it's a personal position. More often the Jasper Coun-

ty Board of Supervisors is solving local problems and meeting the needs of the more than 37,000 people who live in the county. Price says the job is primarily fiscally focused. The retired banker knows all about that.

Having a level head and keeping emotions out of decisions is a practice Price was already accustomed to. Prior to her retirement, Price supervised 200 people in 20 banks. She says the job of a supervisor requires she look at the facts and make the best decision knowing not everybody gets to be happy all the time.

Interestingly enough, Price was one of the few Democratic candidates whose signs appeared alongside the signs of Republican candidates. Even opponent Brandon Talsma's "beard" signs shared lawn space with Price signs. She chalks it up to voters being interested in her as a person rather than a party.

"I think that goes to 45 years of experience serving this community and banking," she says. "I worked with a lot of people through a lot of different projects and helped them personally and their businesses. Some of those people really just know what I stand for and it really isn't party-related."

All three members of the board of supervisors are Republicans. To gain the support of Republicans — whose registered voters now outnumber the registered Democrats — is a big deal. Price says it means a lot for Republican voters to support her.

"It's somewhat of a bold statement," she says, adding the crossover appeal led some to accuse her of being a Republican. "I'm like, 'I'm going to be a servant.'"

10:43 a.m. — Brandon Talsma keeps his mind busy with county work

Brandon Talsma had every intention to camp out at the courthouse like he usually does on Election Day, but now that his name is on the ballot he felt that probably wasn't such a good idea. Still, that did not stop him from keeping himself busy in the supervisors chambers for most of the morning.

Talsma hit the ground running after winning his debut election to the board of supervisors in 2018. Throughout those four years, he has maintained the position of board chairman at least two times and has thrust himself beard first into the middle of county business and county disasters like the 2019 gravel road thaw.

"There's a whole lot of baptism by

fire that whole first year," Talsma says. "There were times that first year I was like, 'I have no idea what I'm doing and I will wholeheartedly admit that I have no idea what I'm doing.' But it's just a whole lot of sitting back that first year or so and learning. I'm still learning."

For the past two years, Talsma says he has become more confident as a county supervisor and as a leader. On the morning of Election Day, he found himself alone in the board room signing off on documents — the boring and tedious stuff. But it kept his mind off the election and the ensuing results.

Like Price, there was some level of worry. While he was confident in the Republican electorate, there was a part of him that thought anything could happen. Keeping himself busy — whether it was scribbling his signature, spending time with family or joining a results viewing party — eased the worry.

Working to fill time is nothing new for Talsma. He keeps tabs on all the county's boards and commissions and frequently works with the county engineer on secondary roads strategies. He's involved with 14 or 15 different boards he either sits on himself or is in discussions with those members.

Does he put too much responsibility on his shoulders, especially when there are two other supervisors on the board? Talsma says that's a question for his wife.

"It ebbs and flows," he says. "There are times where you can put things on autopilot to where there's nothing too big going on. (For example,) a year ago with Larry Ladd and his project, I shifted my focus from one area and put it into community development and planning and zoning."

There are times where he feels like he cannot keep up. Talsma feels like that now. He points to three or four folders sitting at the board table. "This is all drainage information," he says. "Ohhhh it's loads of fun." To him, it's a job where "you get out as much or as little as you put into it."

Talsma says, "You could get elected into this position and be like, yup, I'm going to show up for my 30-minute to an hour meeting on Tuesday morning and I'm going to leave right away and that's all the involvement you have on it. You could get away with doing that."

"As long as you have other people who are participating more actively."

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