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2013 ELECTION | NORFOLK

## SHERIFF'S OFFICE HOPEFULS ADDRESS IMPROVEMENTS

*Candidates talk  
about commitment  
to Norfolk, fairness*

By Gary A. Harki  
The Virginian-Pilot

### NORFOLK

The city's three candidates for sheriff all spoke about their commitment to Norfolk and their desire to be fair to residents at Monday's Suburban Acres Civic League meeting.

It is important to treat everyone with respect, from inmates to deputies, said Neil Bradley, the Republican candidate.

He said he would work hard to improve the jail and the en-

vironment for inmates and deputies.

"We need to do something for the people in there with mental problems," Bradley said. "They are not criminals."

The deputies do a great job, he said, but there are not enough of them.

"The only problem is they are always shorthanded," Bradley said.

Independent candidate Sean Jones, who has run for the office and lost twice before, said he is running again because he "believes in the position."

He said if he were sheriff he would make sure things were fair throughout the department and that he would open up the department more

to the city's residents.

"There are so many people who don't know who the sheriff is right now," Jones said. "You need to know everything about this department just like you need to know everything about every other department."

Sheriff Bob McCabe, a Democrat, said he has worked hard over the years to improve jail conditions.

When he was first elected in 1993, he said, fire escape stairwells on the upper floors of the jail were welded shut, and there were numerous other problems. He said he then opened the facility to the media so they could see how much work needed to be done.

McCabe said he believes the city needs an elected sheriff, rather than one who is appointed, for two reasons: so that the office is responsive to the public and so that Norfolk can continue to receive \$20 million in state funding that it would not receive if the sheriff were appointed.

Gary Harki, 757-446-2370,  
gary.harki@pilotonline.com



Neil Bradley



Sean Jones



Bob McCabe

NORFOLK

# Candidates want offices to work together

*Treasurer, revenue commissioner hopefuls aim for unity*

By Jillian Nolin and Janie Bryant  
The Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK

Candidates for city treasurer and commissioner of the revenue want to tear down the wall between the two constitutional offices.

One candidate, Evans Poston, means that literally. He believes some light office renovations would encourage collaboration and lead to greater efficiencies.

Poston is running for commissioner and has publicly supported Anthony L. Burfoot for treasurer, making them de facto running mates on the Democratic ticket.

Burfoot, who serves on the City Council, was hired about four years ago by the current treasurer to be his deputy chief.

Poston successfully ousted long-time commissioner Sharon McDonald in June. He faces an independent challenger, Sherry Battle-Edmonds, in the Nov. 5 election, while Burfoot squares off against Republican Jim McDonnell.

City Treasurer Thomas Moss

is retiring and has endorsed Burfoot as his successor.

After well-publicized conflicts between McDonald and Moss over the years, tension between the two offices has become an election concern for some voters.

"Those offices should work hand in hand. Let's start with the smallest little things," Poston told the Suburban Acres Civic League this week. He said the offices should share resources, like copier paper.

Poston, 33, said he's knocked on doors all over Norfolk and keeps hearing "why are we fighting?"

Burfoot, 46, told residents at a recent candidate forum at the Mary D. Pretlow Anchor Branch Library that relations can only improve from here.

"One thing we know for certain," he said. "There's going to be a new treasurer and there's going to be a new commissioner of revenue. So it shouldn't be a strained situation because it should be two new people who come into that office."

McDonnell, 48, president of the Talbot Park Civic League, said it is all about "getting along and collaborating and running this city on behalf of you guys."

"It's not an organization that we own," he said.

Battle-Edmonds, a 53-year-old business owner, said she

worked as an engineer, a "very male-dominated industry."

She said working in that environment has prepared her for challenging situations.

"I am a business woman and I plan to take those kinds of skills in leadership," she said.

An overhaul of the city's real estate tax relief program for seniors and disabled residents in February has also become a major issue.

As a councilman, Burfoot voted in favor of changes that significantly scaled back the amount of tax relief available.

Poston said better communication between the commissioner's office and the council would help the city provide adequate relief, and he also believes the program should be placed back under the commissioner after it was moved to the human services department.

McDonnell said he believes the changes were politically motivated and intended to hurt McDonald.

He said that he believes the council should not have changed the program, and that the former program should be reinstated.

Janie Bryant, 757-446-2453, janie.bryant@pilotonline.com

Jillian Nolin, 757-446-2326, jillian.nolin@pilotonline.com



Poston



Burfoot



McDonnell



Battle-Edmonds



NORFOLK RACE

## TREASURER CAMPAIGNS CENTER ON EXPERIENCE AND CONTROVERSY



**Anthony L.  
Burfoot**



**Jim  
McDonnell**

By Jillian Nolin  
*The Virginian-Pilot*

### NORFOLK

Vice Mayor Anthony L. Burfoot, who has spent the past four years preparing to become the next city treasurer, has built his campaign on the experience he gained as chief deputy treasurer.

His opponent, Republican Jim McDonnell, has focused his campaign on reminding voters of the controversies Burfoot has found along the way and pledging to pursue uncollected tax revenue.

The two candidates will compete for an open seat in the Nov. 5 general election, which will be the first citywide election for Burfoot. The 46-year-old councilman, who is serving a third term, was last re-elected to represent Ward 3 in 2010. If the Democrat wins, the council would appoint a temporary replacement in January to serve until the May election.

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## TREASURER | *They have differing ideas on collecting taxes more*

*Continued from Page 1*

McDonnell, 48, is a financial adviser at Merrill Lynch and president of the Talbot Park Civic League. This is his first bid for public office.

Retiring Treasurer Thomas Moss Jr. hired Burfoot in late 2008, making Burfoot the heir apparent. McDonnell has criticized that process as not being transparent.

"How was he selected? How was that determined?" McDonnell said. "These are very important positions, and they're paid by our taxes. There shouldn't be an apprenticeship program for the chosen ones."

Burfoot has taken heat over his work at the Treasurer's Office since he first started. Amid criticism for double dipping, he declined additional pay from the city that could have added about \$20,000 to his salary, city spokeswoman Lori Crouch said.

When Burfoot first reported to work, he made \$52,000; he now earns \$72,000. Because the Treasurer's Office is a constitutional office, his salary is funded with both state and city dollars. The city also pays him \$25,000 for his council work.

"I don't regret taking the steps and coming in here and doing it the right way," Burfoot said. "I was taught that if you work hard, if you prepare yourself, then good things will happen to you."

Burfoot told voters at the Suburban Acres candidate forum last week that he has been running the day-to-day treasurer operations for the past three years.

Burfoot said he took on more of a leadership role in the office after The Virginian-Pilot reported in 2010 that the city was losing as much as \$13 million in real estate tax revenue because of lax, outdated collection practices. The Treasurer's Office has since updated its tactics; most notably, the city started using public

auctions in 2011.

There is now \$4.4 million in uncollected real estate tax revenue, according to information from the Treasurer's Office. There is also about \$11.4 million in uncollected personal property taxes. About \$4 million of those real estate and personal property taxes will

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likely never be collected because of erroneous assessments, worthless property still on the book and other factors, Burfoot said.

McDonnell said that's not good enough, especially with the City Council simultaneously raising the real estate tax rate and scaling back tax relief for seniors and disabled residents this year.

"How can we possibly take that program away from the seniors when we have all those uncollected taxes out there?" McDonnell said.

The City Council voted in February to allow complete tax relief only for those with incomes less than \$28,611 and whose homes are not valued at more than \$203,386. Everyone else who would have previously qualified for 20 to 80 percent exemption must either start paying the tax or defer the tax until the property is sold or left to an heir. Any deferred tax must be paid with a 3.5 percent interest.

The total relief available also has been capped at \$5 million, which is about \$1 million less than last year.

Burfoot voted in favor of the changes because he suspected the program was being abused, but he said last week that the guidelines should be changed again to allow more people back into the program. He also plans to create a fraud department.

Burfoot also voted in favor of increasing the real estate tax rate to \$1.15 per \$100 assessed value from \$1.11.

McDonnell wants the tax relief program completely restored. He also said he would more aggressively promote real estate auctions, create a new department that would focus on tracking down those with the highest delinquent amounts and toss out a new debit card program now used for jurors. Burfoot said the program will save the city \$10,000 annually. McDonnell also said he would attempt to renegotiate a convenience fee charged to those who pay taxes online.

A different approach isn't needed, Burfoot said. The policies in place now will eventually catch those who are not paying their taxes, he said.

McDonnell also has criticized Burfoot on his connection to the Bank of the Commonwealth trial, when a developer, Tommy Arney, testified that Burfoot accepted a bribe. Burfoot, who also took the stand, denied those allegations and was never charged. Arney has since been sentenced to 27 months in prison in the bank scandal.

McDonnell made headlines earlier this month when The Pilot found that he was late paying his car taxes twice in the past three years, with one of those bills paid six months late. A subsequent public records request found that he was nearly two years late paying his 2007 car tax. McDonnell said the bill simply slipped through.

Jillian Nolin, 757-446-2326,  
jillian.nolin@pilotonline.com