

Experience and skill what county needs now

Paul Sommerville, Jerry Stewart and Stewart Rodman are best choices in Tuesday's elections.

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As the recession draws to a close, Beaufort County will likely return to a state of rapid growth. This shift will present a host of new challenges for Beaufort County Council members.

For example, they will have to decide what role to play in jump starting the economy and attracting new industry and jobs; how to entice new residents while also preserving the county's natural habitat and how to meet a growing demand for county services for a group of taxpayers who are, by and large, fiscally conservative and staunchly opposed to tax increases.

The next County Council will have a big say in planning post-recession Beaufort County. It is with this in mind that we endorse the following candidates who possess the experience and skilled hands now needed at the wheel:

- In the District 6 race, incumbent Jerry Stewart is our pick over challenger Stephen Bacon. Experience has taught the former professor and CEO that he needs specific parameters by which to judge the onslaught of requests for county money. His adherence to the three E's — building the economy by attracting new businesses instead of raising property taxes; improving education without granting automatic budget increases to the school district; and protecting the environment — are admirable.

We appreciate Stewart's command of the issues and his willingness to hear both sides as is the case with the frontage road issue affecting St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church and Berkeley Hall.

And while we do have concerns about his general support of government involvement in economic development efforts, he gets high marks for joining Sommerville and opposing the Buckwalter land buy.

"It's a land giveaway to a company," he recently said. "We have too many people who have never been (involved in economic development deals). Twenty minutes (of discussion) and we spent \$1 million."

We urge Stewart to be equally skeptical before voting to buy/improve land for a future commerce park — an idea to which Stewart says he is open.

We haven't always agreed with these candidates' decisions. But each has a command of the issues and a track record worthy of another term. Please consider supporting them Tuesday.

Read more here: <http://www.islandpacket.com/2014/06/07/3151985/experience-and-skill-what-county.html#storylink=cpy>