

Burnett County Board: One contested race

Three new faces on board after April 15 election

Cindy Mickelson | Staff writer

BURNETT COUNTY – There will be a race in the upcoming spring election for District 13 in Burnett County; two candidates will be running for the board of supervisors seat formerly held by the late Burt “Fudd” Lund Jr.

Diane Lund, spouse of Burt Lund Jr., was appointed to serve out the remainder of his term which expires in April. Lund chose not to file candidacy paperwork and will not be on the ballot this spring.

Two candidates, Mitchell Coyour and Patti Hurd, will be vying for the District 13 seat on April 5.

Karen Laqua Anderson is running unopposed for the District 15 seat formerly held by James Pearson and Deborah Mullen is running unopposed for the District 21 seat formerly held by Steve Austin. Pearson and Austin chose not to run for another term on the board.

The board of supervisors is composed of 21 supervisors, elected on even-numbered years for a two-year term beginning the third Tuesday in April following the election. The other 18 incumbents are running unopposed and will be re-elected for another term on the board this spring.

The Leader asked all four candidates the same questions:

1. Why are you running for this seat? If elected, what are your priorities?
 2. What are the biggest issues facing Burnett County?
 3. What are three positive things you like about Burnett County?
 4. Tell us a bit about yourself and your family and any experience you have as a member of a governing board.
- See the candidate's responses below.

Mitchell Coyour

I am running for the seat because of the times and recent changes in our local and nation's government and effects for small business. I personally feel that the only way to keep the things I have worked so hard to achieve as well as the core values I believe in are to voice and stand for these freedoms. I am most passionate on keeping the small-town atmosphere while welcoming the tourists without implementing too much of the city life they are trying to escape. I don't want their appreciated business and existence here to turn our values into theirs. Also, I enjoy the peaceful area we live in and would like to keep Burnett County that way. I think this is one of the greatest assets our county has to offer. I will fight for the small business and the ever-changing laws, economic hardships as well as growing numbers of people moving north.

I believe our biggest or most important issues are growing as a community/county but keeping our vision on our core beliefs and values that make our area such a fantastic place to raise families as well as visit on occasion. All areas are not the same and do not function the same as one blanket rules and laws system can cover. I want to take care of our core values as a community, the land we grew up on as well as grow to accommodate an ever-growing tourist community. I don't believe big corporate policy and blanket nationwide laws all have our small community's best interest in mind. Let's protect our friends and families at home and let the people out there take care of what their values and goals are within their own cities and towns.

Positive things I like about Burnett County include working together on local events and business to grow each successfully.



Mitchell Coyour

Sticking to the core values of what makes our county a place where tourists can escape to for beauty and relaxation.

The overall atmosphere of the local people's willingness to help, maintain our beautiful county along with growing to accommodate our tourism being a large part of local economics, all while sticking to our core values as a small-town community.

I am a lifelong resident of LaFollette township, about 8 miles east of Siren. I am 39 years old. I started a successful and ever-growing sporting clay, game preserve, event center, lodge, gun shop and boutique clothing store coming up on 18 years this summer and work this full time. I started this venture young, with only ambition and a vision and over time, experience and customers have grown to what it is today. Coyland Creek is the business I started on my grandpa's, then dad's, retired dairy farmland that I grew up on. I am married to Kelsie Coyour happily for coming up on 14 years. We live on the same land the business is located on. I am excited to be a part of the county board and hearing different views and keeping the interest of the small business and growing tourist community in mind.

Patti Hurd

I am running for the Burnett County Board supervisor position for District 13 because I believe Burnett County is in the process of making decisions that will have long-lasting impacts on our community.

These decisions include how the land around us is used. I want to ensure that the 500-plus lakes and streams in Burnett County remain clean and healthy. This is not just an environmental issue, but an economic concern. Tourism and people visiting their cabins support local jobs and increase the revenue for our county. They come to enjoy our clean lakes and rivers, explore our woods, hunt and fish, and enjoy outside activities year-round. Many people, including my husband and I, choose to move to Burnett County because of these very reasons. Keeping our lakes and rivers clean and healthy is one of my top priorities. I would also like to encourage business development that protects our natural resources and encourages youth to live in this area. Many of the youth in our county go away for college and don't return. In addition, there are very few local opportunities to receive training for a career in a trade. As a result, Burnett County's poverty rate was 10.7% in 2019. The demand for a skilled workforce exists in our county and we need to identify ways to fill this skills gap. I want Burnett County to be a county that is known as a place where people can earn a wage that can support their family. Efforts to offer training locally are becoming more of a possibility due to innovative technology and partnerships. Finding ways to encourage and support more local training programs that will lead to local work opportunities is another priority for me. Currently there are 21 county board supervisors, and only three are women, one of which is temporary until the election on April 5. Having a county board with diverse backgrounds and ideas will create a board that is more inclusive and representative of our county. I am hoping that my campaign will encourage more women and youth to become actively involved in their community.

The biggest issues facing Burnett County:

We need to find a balance that defines who we are as a county. For example, currently the county is deciding on whether to allow a 26,000-hog farm, or CAFO, to operate near the St. Croix River. This particular CAFO is owned by an out-of-



Patti Hurd

state corporation. The topsoil in Burnett County is not very deep, which means the 9 million gallons of manure will spread across 1,000 acres of land. This will have an impact on the quality of our water and air, along with impacting the residents living nearby. Do we want to be a county that allows large out-of-state corporations to pollute our natural resources? I believe the negative impacts of this type of CAFO would be greater than any economic benefit we may get from having this hog factory in our area. Let's be defined as a county that supports our local, family-run agricultural businesses. Lack of transportation, affordable housing, and health care continue to be major obstacles for many residents who live in our rural county, especially for those who are elderly. With over 20% of our population being 65-plus, now is the time to start identifying ways to meet the needs of this growing population.

Three positive things about Burnett County:

My husband and I moved to Burnett County 13 years ago when we found our home on the scenic Clam River; a place where we could enjoy nature, start a garden, and enjoy the clean and healthy lakes and rivers. Burnett County provides many acres of natural resources to enjoy all year around. Over the years, I have found ways to become part of our community and appreciate living in a small town where people are friendly and willing to help each other. Working with local nonprofits in this area, I have found people in Burnett County to be very giving of their time and money. Many services provided to those in need are only able to continue because of the many volunteers and donations from local businesses, churches and people who retire in Burnett County. I am often impressed by how people in this small community come together to make Burnett County a better place. Burnett County is diverse and resilient. It is composed of several different towns and communities, each with its own unique attributes, but all provide a safe place for people to live or work. Almost every weekend, especially during the summer, there are fun community events to enjoy. From ice-fishing contests to summer festivals, activities can be found for all ages. And whether it is a tornado or a downturn in the economy, Burnett County bounces back and new businesses are welcomed into the community.

A bit about myself and experience as a member of a governing board:

I have over 40 years of experience in providing government services and working for nonprofits, including working as a Children and Family supervisor for Dakota County in Minnesota and later becoming the director of employment services for Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota. Currently I am semi-retired and provide consulting and grant-writing services to local nonprofit organizations, and my husband and I sell produce at the Siren Farmers Market during the summer. Working hard and giving back to my community is important to me. For the past 11 years I have coordinated the local food shelf in Siren. Over the years I have become familiar with various social service organizations and services provided by both our county government and local nonprofit organizations. Connecting people to these services has been part of my weekly activities. I have also served on several local nonprofit boards and participated in several committees that were addressing basic needs of people living in Burnett County. "Let Your Voice Be Heard" – come share your ideas with me. I will be at the Chattering Squirrel commons area every Tuesday in March from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. for questions or just to chat about what is important to you. I am also available via email: patti2@aol.com. Vote for me on April 5 and I will work hard to make Burnett County a better place to live, work and retire.