

Montana's News Station 

RAVALLI COUNTY COVERAGE  **ALWAYS ON**

Voters to decide on Ravalli Co. growth

Posted: Oct 30, 2008 08:16 PM CDT

Updated: Nov 2, 2008 06:10 PM CST

Come Election Day, Ravalli County voters will decide to maintain or appeal their growth policy, which voters approved a few years ago and provide the guidelines that form the basis for managing the county's development.

One group who wants to maintain the policy call themselves the bipartisan campaign for quality of life and say that they believe the policy encourages agriculture, which they say is an important part of the Bitterroot Valley.

"The growth policy is a really important document because it advocates maintaining an agricultural base which is critical to Ravalli County" said Lyle Pilon with the Quality of Life Campaign.

"I came to the Bitterroot Valley a few years ago because I was interested in doing agriculture. I had a lot of trouble finding a place where I could do an agricultural operation" added the campaign's Cheryl Tenold. "So, I came to an agricultural valley and I wanna continue doing that."

The Ravalli County commissioners debated the growth policy last week and Republican Greg Chilcott said voters should repeal the policy, but his challenger John Meakin feels that move would be a step backward.

(from October 31, 2008)



Ravalli County commissioner candidates are wrestling with words like "growth" "impact fees" and "zoning" as they enter the home stretch before next Tuesday's election.

But navigating the hottest issue in this fall's election in the Bitterroot is a complicated journey.

From the Flat Iron project, to the move to repeal the Ravalli County growth policy, this year's county commissioner races are even more complex than last year, as various factions jockey for positions that will support their vision of what the Bitterroot should look like in the future.

But it's not as simple as just stating a position and letting the ballots fall where they may.

Featured Videos


-  **Voters to decide on Ravalli Co. growth**
-  **Ravalli candidates debate costs of growth**



Incumbent Republican Commissioner Greg Chilcott



Challenger John Meakin

 **Growth dominates Ravalli Co. elections**

ADVERTISEMENT

Incumbent Republican Commissioner Greg Chilcott may be working from the "inside" on the county commission, but he has to be cautious as campaign questions fall around active proposals.

During a candidate forum in Hamilton, Chilcott and challenger John Meakin were asked their opinions about the proposed Flat Iron annexation, which has subsequently been rejected by the Hamilton city council. Meakin sees the project as a bad example of how urban sprawl could ruin the Bitterroot.

"You have a major subdivision located three miles away from the city of Hamilton," Meakin said. "All you're doing is extending a project that's going to increase the amount of sprawl in our county."

Chilcott told the audience he couldn't comment directly on Flat Iron because it could come before the commissioners for a decision.

He did point with concern at the other end of the county, in the eight-mile area, where Ravalli County is having to provide the roads and infrastructure to support development across the line in Missoula County.

"We can't charge an impact fee for a subdivision across the jurisdictional boundaries," Chilcott said. "Yet we provide those services necessary to accommodate those folks getting to and from their residences."

Chilcott argues voters should repeal the county's growth policy next week, but Meakin feels that would be a step backward - further proof of the differences showing up on the Bitterroot campaign trail this fall.