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Opponent challenges incumbent Eckhoff's visibility

By **Robert Sanchez**
Daily Herald Staff Writer
Posted Tuesday, February 21, 2006

Four years ago, Grant Eckhoff edged out a sitting DuPage County board member to earn the Republican nomination.

Now, Eckhoff's the incumbent fighting to keep a job.

The 46-year-old Wheaton resident is facing fellow Republican Jerry "J.R." McBride for the District 4 seat.

Whoever wins next month's GOP primary may be unopposed in the fall, as no Democratic candidates have filed.

"I am running for office because I have made a strong positive impact on the county board during the first three years," Eckhoff said. "I will continue to have the same impact in the future."

But McBride, a 38-year-old Glen Ellyn insurance broker, said Eckhoff hasn't been visible within the community.

"He's not around very much outside of the county board meetings," McBride said Monday during a meeting with the Daily Herald's editorial board. "When I've gone out to different events, I don't see him around."

In addition to being out in the district and communicating with residents, McBride said, he would meet regularly with municipal leaders.

"You need to be out and about to really gauge what people are thinking," he said.

But Eckhoff says that's something he's already doing.





In addition to meeting regularly with Wheaton's mayor, Eckhoff said, he's done mailings to elected officials and about 1,500 households.

"I am not sure what he (McBride) means when he says I'm not visible," Eckhoff said. "That's something he made up to run."

McBride also took aim at the county board's decision to increase the property tax levy for the first time in a decade.

As a result, owners of a typical \$290,000 house this year will pay about \$7 more in property taxes to the county.

"We're getting \$15 million a year (from the DuPage Water Commission) for our budget, and we still had to raise the county levy," McBride said. "That's unbelievable

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to me.”

With the water commission payments set to expire in June 2007, he said, the county must consider cutting costs.

“You’ve got to look at the whole (budget) and see if there’s any wasteful spending,” McBride said.

Eckhoff said DuPage already is at the point where spending has been “cut to the bone.”

“Anybody who says we should cut more out of the budget needs to be specific and tell me where they are going to cut,” he said, adding the more realistic solution is to increase revenue.

A county subcommittee is exploring new revenue sources, including increasing sales taxes and creating a tax on tobacco.

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