First Financial Northwest, Inc. Form DEF 14A
April 26, 2019 Proxy Statement Pursuant to Section 14(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934
Filed by the registrant [X] Filed by a party other than the registrant []
Check the appropriate box: [] Preliminary proxy statement [] Confidential, for use of the Commission only (as permitted by Rule 14a-6(e)(2)) [X] Definitive proxy statement [] Definitive additional materials [] Soliciting material under § 240.14a-12
FIRST FINANCIAL NORTHWEST, INC. (Name of registrant as specified in its charter)
(Name of person(s) filing proxy statement, if other than the registrant)
Payment of filing fee (Check the appropriate box): [X] No fee required. [] Fee computed on table below per Exchange Act Rules 14a-6(i)(1) and 0-11.
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[] Check box if any part of the fee is offset as provided by Exchange Act Rule 0-11(a)(2) and identify the filing for which the offsetting fee was paid previously. Identify the previous filing by registration statement number, or the Form or Schedule and the date of its filing. (1) Amount previously paid: N/A

(2) Form, schedule or registration statement no.:	
N/A	
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(4) Date filed:	
N/A	

April 26, 2019

Dear Shareholder:

You are cordially invited to attend the annual meeting of shareholders of First Financial Northwest, Inc. ("First Financial") to be held at 207 Wells Avenue South, in the building adjacent to the main branch and headquarters of First Financial Northwest Bank, Renton, Washington, on Wednesday, June 12, 2019, at 9:00 a.m., local time.

The Notice of Annual Meeting of Shareholders and Proxy Statement appearing on the following pages describe the formal business to be transacted at the meeting. During the meeting, we will also report on our operations. Directors and officers of First Financial, as well as a representative of Moss Adams LLP, our independent registered public accounting firm, will be present to respond to shareholder questions.

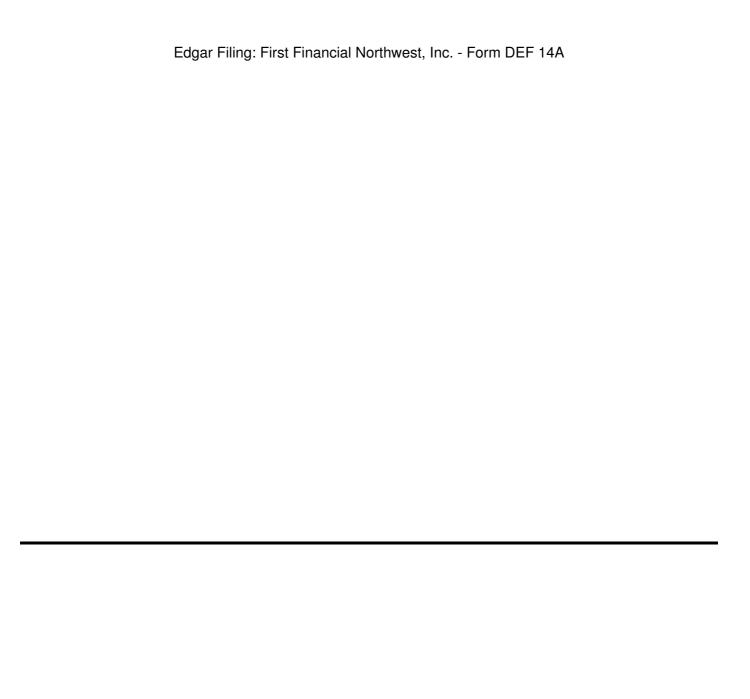
It is important that your shares are represented at the meeting, whether or not you attend in person and regardless of the number of shares you own. To make sure your shares are represented, we urge you to complete and mail the enclosed proxy card as promptly as possible or to vote by telephone or the Internet, following the instructions on the proxy card. If you attend the meeting, you may vote in person even if you have previously voted.

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

Sincerely,

/s/ Roger H. Molvar

Roger H. Molvar Chairman



FIRST FINANCIAL NORTHWEST, INC. 201 WELLS AVENUE SOUTH RENTON, WASHINGTON 98057 (425) 255-4400

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS TO BE HELD ON JUNE 12, 2019

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of shareholders of First Financial Northwest, Inc. will be held at 207 Wells Avenue South, in the building adjacent to the main branch and headquarters of First Financial Northwest Bank, Renton, Washington, on Wednesday, June 12, 2019, at 9:00 a.m., local time, for the following purposes:

Proposal 1. Election of two directors to each serve for a three-year term and one director to serve for a one-year term;

Proposal Advisory (non-binding) approval of the compensation paid to our named executive officers as disclosed in this Proxy Statement;

Proposal 3. Ratification of the appointment of Moss Adams LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for 2019.

We will also consider and act upon such other business as may properly come before the meeting, or any adjournments or postponements thereof. As of the date of this notice, we are not aware of any other business to come before the annual meeting.

Important notice regarding the availability of proxy materials for the annual meeting of shareholders to be held on June 12, 2019. Our Proxy Statement, proxy card and 2018 Annual Report to Shareholders are available at www.ffnwb.com/investor/proxy. On that website, you will also find directions to attend the annual meeting, where you may vote in person.

The Board of Directors has fixed the close of business on April 15, 2019, as the record date for the annual meeting. This means that shareholders of record at the close of business on that date are entitled to receive notice of, and to vote at the meeting and any adjournment thereof. To ensure that your shares are represented at the meeting, please take the time to vote by signing, dating and mailing the enclosed proxy card, which is solicited on behalf of the Board of Directors, and mail it promptly in the enclosed envelope. Alternatively, you may vote by telephone or the Internet by following the instructions on the proxy card. The proxy will not be used if you attend and vote at the annual meeting in person. Regardless of the number of shares you own, your vote is very important. Please act today.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

/s/ JOANN E. LEE

JOANN E. LEE SECRETARY

Renton, Washington April 26, 2019

IMPORTANT: The prompt return of proxies will save us the expense of further requests for proxies in order to ensure a quorum. A proxy card and pre-addressed envelope are enclosed for your convenience. No postage is required if mailed in the United States. You may also vote by telephone or the Internet by following the instructions on the proxy card.

PROXY STATEMENT OF FIRST FINANCIAL NORTHWEST, INC. 201 WELLS AVENUE SOUTH RENTON, WASHINGTON 98057 (425) 255-4400

ANNUAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS JUNE 12, 2019

The Board of Directors of First Financial Northwest, Inc. is using this Proxy Statement to solicit proxies from our shareholders for use at the 2019 annual meeting of shareholders. We are first mailing this Proxy Statement and proxy card to our shareholders on or about April 26, 2019.

The information provided in this Proxy Statement relates to First Financial Northwest, Inc. and its wholly-owned subsidiary, First Financial Northwest Bank. First Financial Northwest, Inc. may also be referred to as "First Financial" and First Financial Northwest Bank may also be referred to as the "Bank." References to "we," "us" and "our" refer to First Financial and, as the context requires, First Financial Northwest Bank.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ANNUAL MEETING

Time and Place of the Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Wednesday, June 12, 2019

Time: 9:00 a.m., local time

Place: 207 Wells Avenue South, Renton, Washington (adjacent to the main branch and headquarters of First Financial Northwest Bank)

Matters to Be Considered at the Annual Meeting

At the meeting, you will be asked to consider and vote upon the following proposals:

Proposal 1. Election of two directors to each serve for a three-year term and one director to serve for a one-year term; Advisory (non-binding) approval of the compensation paid to our named executive officers as disclosed in Proposal

this Proxy Statement;

Proposal 3. Ratification of the appointment of Moss Adams LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for 2019.

We also will transact any other business that may properly come before the annual meeting. As of the date of this Proxy Statement, we are not aware of any other business to be presented for consideration at the annual meeting other than the matters described in this Proxy Statement.

Who is Entitled to Vote?

We have fixed the close of business on April 15, 2019, as the record date for shareholders entitled to receive notice of and to vote at our annual meeting. Only holders of record of First Financial's common stock on that date are entitled to receive notice of and to vote at the annual meeting. You are entitled to one vote for each share of First Financial common stock you own, unless you own more than 10 percent of First Financial's outstanding shares. As provided in our Articles of Incorporation, record holders of common stock who beneficially own in excess of 10 percent of First Financial's outstanding shares are not entitled to any vote in respect of the

shares held in excess of the 10 percent limit unless our Board of Directors has granted permission in advance. On April 15, 2019, there were 10,445,125 shares of First Financial common stock outstanding and entitled to vote at the annual meeting.

How Do I Vote at the Annual Meeting?

Proxies are solicited to provide all shareholders on the voting record date an opportunity to vote on matters scheduled for the annual meeting and described in these materials. This question provides voting instructions for shareholders of record. You are a shareholder of record if your shares of First Financial common stock are held in your name. If you are a beneficial owner of First Financial common stock held by a broker, bank or other nominee (i.e., in "street name"), please see the instructions in the following question.

Shares of First Financial common stock can only be voted if the shareholder is present in person or by proxy at the annual meeting. To ensure your representation at the annual meeting, we recommend you vote by sending in the proxy card even if you plan to attend the annual meeting. You can also vote by telephone or the Internet by following the instructions on the proxy card. You can always change your vote at the meeting if you are a shareholder of record.

Voting instructions are included on your proxy card. Shares of First Financial common stock represented by properly executed proxies will be voted by the Proxy Committee of the Board of Directors in accordance with the shareholder's instructions. Where properly executed proxies are returned to us with no specific instruction as how to vote at the annual meeting, the persons named in the proxy will vote the shares FOR the election of each of our director nominees, FOR advisory approval of the compensation paid to our executive compensation as disclosed in this Proxy Statement and FOR the ratification of the appointment of Moss Adams LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for 2019. If any other matters are properly presented at the annual meeting for action, the Proxy Committee will have the discretion to vote on these matters in accordance with their best judgment. We do not currently expect that any other matters will be properly presented for action at the annual meeting.

You may receive more than one proxy card depending on how your shares are held. For example, you may hold some of your shares individually, some jointly with your spouse and some in trust for your children. In this case, you will receive three separate proxy cards to vote.

What if My Shares Are Held in Street Name?

If you are the beneficial owner of shares held in "street name" by a broker, your broker, as the record holder of the shares, is required to vote the shares in accordance with your instructions. If you do not give instructions to your broker, your broker may nevertheless vote the shares with respect to discretionary items, but will not be permitted to vote your shares with respect to non-discretionary items, pursuant to current industry practice. In the case of non-discretionary items, the shares not voted will be treated as "broker non-votes." The proposal to elect directors and the advisory vote on executive compensation are considered non-discretionary items; therefore, you must provide instructions to your broker in order to have your shares voted on these proposals.

If your shares are held in street name, you will need proof of ownership to be admitted to the annual meeting. A recent brokerage statement or letter from the record holder of your shares are examples of proof of ownership. If you want to vote your shares of common stock held in street name in person at the annual meeting, you will have to get a written proxy in your name from the broker, bank or other nominee who holds your shares.

How Will My Shares of Common Stock Held in the Employee Stock Ownership Plan Be Voted?

We maintain the First Financial Northwest, Inc. Employee Stock Ownership Plan ("ESOP") for the benefit of our employees. Each participant may instruct the trustee how to vote the shares of First Financial common stock allocated to his or her account under the ESOP by completing the voting instruction sheet distributed by the administrator. If a

participant properly executes the voting instruction sheet, the administrator will instruct the trustee to vote the participant's shares in accordance with the participant's instructions. Unallocated shares of First Financial common stock held in the ESOP will be voted by the trustee in the same proportion as shares for which the trustee has received voting instructions. Allocated shares for which proper voting instructions are not received shall

be voted by the trustee in the manner directed by the administrator. The administrator of the ESOP is Crowe Horwath.

How Many Shares Must Be Present to Hold the Meeting?

A quorum must be present at the meeting for any business to be conducted. The presence at the meeting, in person or by proxy, of at least a majority of the shares of First Financial common stock entitled to vote at the annual meeting as of the record date will constitute a quorum. Proxies received but marked as abstentions and broker non-votes will be included in the calculation of the number of shares considered to be present at the meeting.

What if a Quorum Is Not Present at the Meeting?

If a quorum is not present at the scheduled time of the meeting, a majority of the shareholders present or represented by proxy may adjourn the meeting until a quorum is present. The time and place of the adjourned meeting will be announced at the time the adjournment is taken, and no other notice will be given unless the adjourned meeting is set to be held 120 days or more after the original meeting. An adjournment will have no effect on the business that may be conducted at the meeting.

Vote Required to Approve Proposal 1: Election of Directors

Directors are elected by a plurality of the votes cast, in person or by proxy, at the annual meeting by holders of First Financial common stock. Our Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee has nominated, and our Board of Directors has ratified, the nomination of three candidates for election as directors. Pursuant to our Articles of Incorporation, shareholders are not permitted to cumulate their votes for the election of directors. Votes may be cast for or withheld from each nominee. Votes that are withheld and broker non-votes will have no effect on the outcome of the election because the three nominees receiving the greatest number of votes will be elected. Our Board of Directors unanimously recommends that you vote FOR the election of each of its director nominees.

Vote Required to Approve Proposal 2: Advisory Approval of Executive Compensation

Approval of the advisory (non-binding) vote on executive compensation requires the affirmative vote of a majority of the votes cast, in person or by proxy, at the annual meeting. Abstentions and broker non-votes will have no effect on the outcome of the proposal. Our Board of Directors unanimously recommends that you vote FOR approval of the compensation of our named executive officers.

Vote Required to Approve Proposal 3: Ratification of the Appointment of the Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm

Ratification of the appointment of Moss Adams LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2019, requires the affirmative vote of a majority of the votes cast, in person or by proxy, at the annual meeting. Abstentions will have no effect on the outcome of the proposal. Our Board of Directors unanimously recommends that you vote FOR the ratification of the appointment of the independent registered public accounting firm.

May I Revoke My Proxy?

You may revoke your proxy before it is voted by:

- · submitting a new proxy with a later date;
- notifying the Secretary of First Financial in writing (or if you hold your shares in street name, your broker, bank or other nominee) before the annual meeting that you have revoked your proxy; or

·voting in person at the annual meeting.

If you plan to attend the annual meeting and wish to vote in person, we will give you a ballot at the annual meeting. However, if your shares are held in street name, you must bring a validly executed proxy from the nominee indicating that you have the right to vote your shares.

SECURITY OWNERSHIP OF CERTAIN BENEFICIAL OWNERS AND MANAGEMENT

The following table sets forth, as of April 15, 2019, the voting record date, information regarding share ownership of: those persons or entities (or groups of affiliated persons or entities) known by management to beneficially own more than five percent of First Financial's common stock other than directors and executive officers; each director and director nominee of First Financial; each executive officer of First Financial or any of its subsidiaries named in the Summary Compensation Table appearing under "Executive Compensation" below (known as "named executive officers"); and all current directors and executive officers of First Financial and its subsidiaries as a group.

Persons and groups who beneficially own in excess of five percent of First Financial's common stock are required to file with the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC"), and provide us a copy of the report disclosing their ownership pursuant to the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended ("Securities Exchange Act"). To our knowledge, no other person or entity, other than the ones set forth below, beneficially owned more than five percent of the outstanding shares of First Financial's common stock as of the close of business on the voting record date.

Beneficial ownership is determined in accordance with the rules and regulations of the SEC. In accordance with Rule 13d-3 of the Securities Exchange Act, a person is deemed to be the beneficial owner of any shares of common stock if he or she has voting and/or investment power with respect to those shares. Therefore, the table below includes shares owned by spouses, other immediate family members in trust, shares held in retirement accounts or funds for the benefit of the named individuals, shares held in the ESOP, and other forms of ownership, over which shares the persons named in the table may possess voting and/or investment power. In addition, in computing the number of shares beneficially owned by a person and the percentage ownership of that person, shares of common stock subject to outstanding options that are currently exercisable or exercisable within 60 days after April 15, 2019, are included in the number of shares beneficially owned by the person and are deemed outstanding for the purpose of calculating the person's percentage ownership. These shares, however, are not deemed outstanding for the purpose of computing the percentage ownership of any other person.

As of April 15, 2019, the voting record date, there were 10,445,125 shares of First Financial common stock outstanding.

Number of

Name	Shares Beneficially Owned (1)	Percent of Shares Outstanding (%)
Beneficial Owners of More Than 5%		
First Financial Northwest, Inc. Employee Stock Ownership Plan	1,068,273(2)	10.23
First Financial Northwest Foundation	1,010,000(3)	9.67
Dimensional Fund Advisors LP	917,300 (4)	8.78
Blackrock, Inc.	910,159 (5)	8.71
Renaissance Technologies LLC	649,000 (6)	6.21
Directors		
Gary F. Faull	71,235	*
Richard P. Jacobson**	106,252	1.01
Joseph W. Kiley III**	175,315	1.66
Joann E. Lee	91,910	*
Roger H. Molvar	5,613	*
Kevin D. Padrick	46,374	*
Patricia M. Remch		*
Richard M. Riccobono	3,271	*
Daniel L. Stevens	8,113	*
Named Executive Officers		
Ronnie J. Clariza	57,335	*
Dalen D. Harrison	32,480	*
Simon Soh	*	1.32
All Executive Officers and Directors as a Group (13 persons)	736,367	6.87

^{*} Less than one percent of shares outstanding.

For executive officers, includes shares of restricted stock, as to which the holders have voting but not dispositive power, and unvested shares of stock held in the ESOP, as to which the holders have voting but not dispositive

The ESOP has sole voting power with respect to 423,200 shares, shared voting power with respect 645,073 shares (2) and sole dispositive power with respect to 1,068,273 shares. The address of the ESOP is 201 Wells Avenue South, Renton, Washington 98057.

We established the First Financial Northwest Foundation in connection with the mutual to stock conversion of First Financial Northwest Bank to further our commitment to the local community. Shares of common stock held by the

(3) Foundation will be voted in the same proportion as all other shares of common stock on all proposals considered by First Financial's shareholders The address of the First Financial Northwest Foundation is 555 S. Renton Village Place, Suite 770, Renton, Washington 98057.

(4)

^{**} Also a named executive officer.

⁽¹⁾ power. Also includes the following number of First Financial shares that the indicated individuals have the right to acquire within 60 days of the voting record date through the exercise of stock options: Mr. Jacobson, 69,000 shares; Mr. Kiley, 125,000 shares; Ms. Harrison, 16,000 shares; Mr. Soh, 70,000 shares; and all executive officers and directors as a group, 280,000 shares.

Based solely on a Schedule 13G/A dated February 8, 2019, regarding shares owned as of December 31, 2018, reporting sole voting power over 886,705 shares and sole dispositive power over 917,300 shares. The address of Dimensional Fund Advisors LP is Building One, 6300 Bee Cave Road, Austin, Texas 78746.

Based solely on a Schedule 13G dated February 7, 2019, regarding shares owned as of December 31, 2018,

- (5) reporting sole voting power over 818,255 shares and sole dispositive power over 910,159 shares. The address of Blackrock, Inc. is 55 East 52nd Street, New York, New York 10055.
 - Based solely on a Schedule 13G/A dated February 12, 2019, regarding shares owned as of December 31, 2018,
- reporting that Renaissance Technologies LLC and Renaissance Technologies Holdings Corporation have sole voting power and sole dispositive power over 649,000 shares. The address of Renaissance Technologies LLC is 800 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022.
- (7) Includes 11,000 shares held in an individual retirement account.

PROPOSAL 1 – ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

Our Board of Directors currently consists of nine members and is divided into three classes. On April 1, 2019, the Board of Directors appointed Patricia M. Remch as a director of First Financial and the Bank. Ms. Remch was recommended for appointment by First Financial's Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee for an initial one-year term. Director Faull will retire effective as of the annual meeting of shareholders, at which time the size of the Board of Directors will be reduced to eight members. Approximately one-third of the directors are elected annually to serve for a three-year period or until their respective successors are elected and qualified. The table below sets forth information regarding each director of First Financial and each Board nominee for director.

The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee of the Board of Directors selects nominees for election as directors. All of our nominees currently serve as First Financial directors. Each nominee has consented to being named in this Proxy Statement and has agreed to serve if elected. It is intended that the proxies solicited on behalf of the Board of Directors (other than proxies in which the vote is withheld as to the nominee) will be voted at the annual meeting for the election of the nominees identified in the table below. If a nominee is unable to stand for election, the Board of Directors may either reduce the number of directors to be elected or select a substitute nominee. If a substitute nominee is selected, the proxy holders will vote your shares for the substitute nominee, unless you have withheld authority. At this time, we are not aware of any reason why a nominee might be unable to serve if elected.

The Board of Directors recommends a vote FOR the election of Patricia M. Remch, Joann E. Lee and Kevin D. Padrick.

Name	Age as of December 31, 2018	Year first elected or appointed director	Term to expire		
BOARD NOMINEES					
Patricia M. Remch	66	2019 (1)	2020 (2)		
Joann E. Lee	63	2005 (3)	2022 (2)		
Kevin D. Padrick	63	2013	2022 (2)		
DIRECTORS CONTINUING IN OFFICE					
Joseph W. Kiley III	63	2012	2020		
Roger H. Molvar	63	2015	2020		
Richard M. Riccobono	61	2016	2020		
Richard P. Jacobson	55	2013	2021		
Daniel L. Stevens	75	2012	2021		

⁽¹⁾ Appointed to the Board effective April 1, 2019.

Information Regarding Nominees for Election. Set forth below is the principal occupation and other business experience during at least the last five years of each nominee for director.

Patricia M. Remch was appointed as a director of First Financial, First Financial Diversified, and First Financial Northwest Bank effective April 1, 2019. She has 35 years of experience in the financial services industry. Ms. Remch

⁽²⁾ Assuming election or reelection.

Includes service on the Board of Directors of First Financial Northwest Bank (previously known as First Savings Bank of Renton and First Savings Bank Northwest).

has held various roles at the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco, most recently Senior Vice President, Sales, Marketing, and Business Development from March 2017 to July 2018. Previously, Ms. Remch was Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing, from August 2011 to March 2017, and was Senior Vice President, Mortgage Finance Sales and Product Development, from February 2005 to August 2011. She joined the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco as an economist in 1982, was promoted to capital markets specialist, and became Vice President, Sales Manager, in 1998. Ms. Remch has served as a director of Community Bank of the Bay, Oakland, California, since March 2019. Ms. Remch is a graduate of the ABA Graduate School of Banking and a

Ph.D. Candidate in Economics at the University of Maryland, where she also received her Master of Arts in Economics. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the State University of New York at Albany.

Joann E. Lee serves as a director of First Financial, First Financial Diversified, and First Financial Northwest Bank, positions held since the companies were established in 2007 as part of the mutual to stock conversion process. She was appointed Secretary of First Financial in May 2011, of First Financial Northwest Bank in September 2013, and of First Financial Diversified in June 2014. Prior to the conversion, she served as a director of First Financial Holdings, MHC, First Financial of Renton, and First Savings Bank of Renton since 2005. Ms. Lee is a Certified Public Accountant, a Chartered Global Management Accountant, holds a Master's Degree in Taxation, and has been the owner of Joann Lee & Associates, CPAs since 2002. Prior to that, Ms. Lee spent 11 years as a Certified Public Accountant, including an eight-year career with the national independent public accounting firm of RSM McGladrey. She also served as the RSM Director of the Small Business Division, Puget Sound Region. Prior to becoming a CPA, Ms. Lee was employed in the banking industry in the position of Corporate Operations Officer for a Washington community bank. Ms. Lee is a past president, current treasurer and Board member of the Rotary Club of Renton, Renton Rotary CAPER, Renton Rotary Foundation, and past president of the Renton Technical College Foundation and past member of Renton YMCA Board of Directors. She is also a member of the Renton Communities in Schools, member and past treasurer of the Renton Chamber of Commerce. In addition, Ms. Lee serves as a Trustee of the First Financial Northwest Foundation and serves as its Treasurer.

Kevin D. Padrick was appointed as a director of First Financial, First Financial Diversified, and First Financial Northwest Bank effective March 2013. Mr. Padrick is a lawyer and Senior Principal and co-founder of Obsidian Finance Group, LLC, a hybrid financial advisory and investment firm based in Lake Oswego, Oregon. Mr. Padrick also indirectly owns Sunstone Business Finance, LLC, an asset-based lender, and Symmetrical Networks, LLC, an entity providing broadband construction and financing. Prior to founding Obsidian Finance Group, LLC, Mr. Padrick was a partner with the law firm, Miller Nash, LLP, where he chaired the insolvency department and represented debtors, secured and unsecured creditors, and creditors' committees. He received Bachelor of Science degrees in mathematics and psychology, and Master of Business Administration and Juris Doctor Degrees from the University of Santa Clara.

Information Regarding Incumbent Directors. The present principal occupation and other business experience during at least the last five years of each director continuing in office is set forth below.

Joseph W. Kiley III has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of First Financial and First Financial Diversified since September 2013; a director of First Financial and First Financial Diversified since December 2012; and President, Chief Executive Officer and director of First Financial Northwest Bank since September 2012. He previously served as President, Chief Executive Officer, and director of Frontier Bank,