

Imbler voters pass anti-marijuana measure

By Dick Mason
The Observer

No commercial marijuana production or processing plants will be operating in Imbler anytime in the foreseeable future. Imbler voters made sure of this Tuesday when they approved Measure 31-9737 113 to 61 according to unofficial results from the Union County Clerk's Office. Measure 31-9737 creates an ordinance prohibiting the sale, production and processing of marijuana for medical or recreational purposes within Imbler's city limits.

The biggest impact of the measure will be on the production and processing of marijuana in Imbler, according to Imbler Mayor Mike McLean. Although Oregon voters legalized the sale of recreational marijuana by passing Measure 91 in 2014, the sale of it has remained illegal in Imbler because all land in the city limits is within 1,000 feet of its schools. State law prohibits recreational or medical marijuana from being sold within 1,000 feet of a school.

Still the door remained open for marijuana to be processed and grown in Imbler. This was evident in the spring of 2017 when a La Grande entrepreneur expressed interest in opening a medical marijuana processing plant in Imbler. The businessman decided against pursuing the project after determining it would be too expensive to open a plant in the town. The owner told the city council that none of the available commercially zoned land in Imbler where a medical marijuana processing plant could operate had an existing building that could house a processing plant. The businessman said it would not be financially feasible to pay for the construction of a new building.

Word of the businessman's initial proposal created an uproar in Imbler and brought about 70 people to an April 2017 meeting at Imbler High School to discuss the issue. McLean said he believes the vast majority of the people at the meeting from Imbler opposed marijuana being allowed in their town.

Imbler does not have a past history of supporting marijuana at the ballot box. In the 2014 November election, voters in Imbler opposed Measure 91, voting it down 113 to 43.

McLean said he anticipated Measure 31-9737 would fail. "The election result was not surprising at all," the mayor said Tuesday night.

All sales of marijuana in Oregon are taxed by the state. The marijuana tax revenue is then redistributed to municipalities including cities, law enforcement agencies and schools. The City of Imbler has been receiving between \$800 to \$1,000 a year in marijuana tax money from the state, City Recorder Jennifer Toepke told The Observer in October. The City of Imbler will no longer receive this funding following Measure 31-9737's approval.

JUDGE

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Union and Wallowa counties had the opportunity to elect their own judge," Wes said. "A judge should not be selected from the top down. A judge should not be selected by the governor. A judge should be elected by the people."

Wes has been an attorney in La Grande since 1996. He works as both as a civil and criminal lawyer. He said the transition from lawyer to judge will be challenging.

"I think it's going to require a lot of hard work, studying and self-discipline, but that's something I'm accustomed to," he said. "I'm very humbled the citizens of Union and Wallowa counties have honored me, and I'll work for them every day as hard as I can to be the best judge I can."

At the Union County Candidates Forum, Wes identified the most pressing issue facing Union and Wallowa counties as drug abuse. He said he wanted to expand the use of drug treatment court.

"Something we could expand is something Judge Russ (West) started years ago and he did a great job with it, and that's our drug treatment program," Wes said. "If it's a first-time offense, and not involved in violence, then you can enroll in the drug treatment program. If you comply with drug treatment court, then we can help you become clean and start a life of sobriety."

Wes was born in Oregon City and graduated from Estacada High School in 1979. He went on to attend Southern Oregon State College before graduating from Portland State University with

a degree in social science and a teaching certificate. Wes taught at Sandy High School for seven years while saving money for law school. He then attended law school at the University of Oregon and graduated with a juris doctor degree in 1996.

Wes has defended clients from numerous criminal charges, and has even won a case in front of the Oregon Supreme Court.

Wes said leaving his practice will be difficult for him.

"I'm really going to miss my clients," he said. "In 22 years, I've built a huge clientele of some really quality, hard-working people from all walks of life, and it's going to be difficult to let that go."

Wes will be sworn in January 2019.

Mona could not be reached for comment before deadline.

IMBLER

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for 32 years. Dewey has served as the Imbler School District's deputy clerk for 21 years.

She said one of her focuses will be on Imbler's animal control ordinance, which she believes needs to be consolidated. The City of Imbler currently has two animal control ordinances, and Dewey said during her campaign they should be combined into one, a belief that inspired her to file for an opening on the Imbler City Council.

Dewey said the two animal control ordinances create confusion because they apply to different parts of the city. This means animal control rules vary in different parts of Imbler.

Clinkenbeard focused on speeding in the Imbler area during his campaign. He said he has been disturbed by speeding cars on Dry Creek Road on the western outskirts of Imbler where he lives and on Imbler's main street, Highway 82. He emphasized the need for the Oregon State Police and the Union County Sheriff's Office to focus more attention on enforcing speeding laws in the Imbler area.

Clinkenbeard said he will be attending city council meetings in the future and will continue to push the speeding issue.

"I definitely will be bringing it up," he said.

Barreto keeps state representative position

■ Acknowledges Republicans will have a bigger challenge moving forward as they become super minority

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

Incumbent Greg Barreto will keep his seat as State Representative for District 58.

In Tuesday night's race, Barreto's unofficial results were approximately 19,000 votes against his challenger, Independent Skye Farnam, who received approximately 6,000 votes in Union, Wallowa and Umatilla counties.

Even with the win, Barreto said the Republican Party is now a super minority in the House, which will make it more challenging to pass legislation on conservative platforms.

"We lost three of our incumbent seats," Barreto told The Observer Tuesday night. "We're now the super minority. How does that change my job? It doesn't change it a whole lot. We were already in the minority status."

Barreto, who also noted Democratic incumbent Kate Brown beat out Republican challenger Knute Buehler for governor, said he expects Democrats will raise taxes at their leisure.

"The constituent work

I do helping in the district won't change," he said. "Putting out bills for rural counties won't change. However, the people in Oregon, as well as businesses in Oregon, will likely see their taxes go up. It will get tougher for businesses in Oregon."

Barreto will be entering into his third term as representative.

He added recruiting representatives will be tougher because of this shift, but he is confident that in two years things will shift a bit closer to his party's platform.

"It truly is an honor to run for this position," he said. "It would be much more enjoyable if we were in the majority. You play the hand you're dealt, though, and do the best you can with it. The pendulum always swings back and forth. With where we're headed in the next couple of years, you'll see it swing back. I think we can pull out of the super minority status. We'll see. I'm still glad to do the job."

In a previous Observer article, Barreto said his more than 35 years in

business makes him a good representative.

"Working with customers, employees, vendors, sales reps and other business-related folks both here and internationally has given me an ability to work with and through challenging situations," Barreto said in the article. "These experiences have shown me how to work to pass bipartisan bills that have benefited House District 58. As I have gotten older and more educated on a lot of different issues in the social realm, I look more objectively than emotionally at issues."

Barreto said the biggest challenge facing District 58 is the direction the state is headed when it comes to its business policy and how it will impact rural economies when attracting or retaining small businesses and jobs.

"We are riding on the coattails of a booming national economy and it is still very difficult to attract small business to rural Oregon," he said. "The state policies continue to increase the cost of doing business. State budgets

will be strained by our public retirement system, Medicaid costs and increased cost-of-living expenses. The answer is not trying to extract more dollars from Oregon's citizens, but looking at the state's expenses and seeing if we can't run the state more efficiently. When Oregon has the sixth-highest government spending per capita, more than 43 other states, there is certainly room for better management of your tax dollars."

ELGIN

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sidewalk construction and a \$3.5 million sewer project and establishing a new subdivision — the largest housing growth in the city in more than 30 years.

As for this term, Duffy wants to "continue the progress we've started," work that hasn't slowed even during the election season.

"(Work) hasn't stopped. You just keep moving forward, and that's what we've done," he said.

"We've concentrated on and reduced our debt by quite a bit. We're still under what (the city) had in debt before (I took) office four years ago, even with the purchase of the new city hall building."

Within the last two weeks, Elgin's city offices transitioned into a larger building. At the next city

council meeting, the city will transfer the lease of the former city hall building to the Elgin Museum. Duffy predicts that after the museum officially takes over the space and conducts minor changes to the building/layout, a tentative opening can be set for sometime this summer.

"We have some big projects. We're excited the museum has a new home and excited to get them up and going, along with the Opera House expansion that's been in the works for quite some time," Duffy said. "We're hoping (those projects) will help attract more people to Elgin."

Concerning his opponent, Duffy said he noted a sense of ambiguity in Rutherford's overall message to the community.

"I think my opponent didn't make a case (for

himself)," Duffy said. "Citizens didn't know where he stood or what his platform was."

Duffy celebrated his win "at home with family and close friends," as well as with the Elgin's newest city councilor, Ryan Martin.

"I'm looking forward to working with him. He's a young man with a lot of good ideas and I think he's going to bring a lot to Elgin," Duffy said.

Rutherford was not available for comment at press time.

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