

ELECTION

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Position 4 also is up for election, where incumbent Pam Glenn is running uncontested.

Position 5

Beck and Bowles each grew up in the Grande Ronde Valley. Bowles is a 1981 graduate of Union High School, and Beck is a 2005 Imbler High School graduate.

Beck said he is running because he wants to make sure the district continues to address the issues that parents of Imbler students are concerned about.

"I want to help our voices to be heard," he said.

Beck and his wife, Mary, are the parents of two children who attend Imbler Elementary School. The rancher said one of the school district's strengths is its small size, which results in students getting more attention. He also is impressed with the school district's faculty.

"We have a great group of teachers," said Beck, who said the same was true when he was an Imbler student.

The candidate, who has a bachelor's of science degree in rangeland ecology and management, said he wants the school district to continue to have a strong vocational program for students not going to college. Beck said he would like to see the school district bring in more people, such as plumbers and welders, to talk with students about careers in their fields.

"Vocational skills are incredibly important," he said.

Bowles said he was

inspired to run because he believes the school district should continue offering a strong education program that focuses on fundamentals.

"I want to make sure the students receive a fundamental education and not one based on social, political or social agendas," Bowles said.

He said that to receive a fundamental education is to be taught both sides of history. Bowles said it is important that students are shown what leaders did correctly, as well as when they made missteps.

"We learn from our mistakes as much as our successes," Bowles said.

The candidate said he is impressed with Imbler's teachers and parents. He credited both with caring deeply about the students of the Imbler School District.

Bowles has a bachelor's of science degree in construction management from Brigham Young University and an associate's degree in general studies from BYU-Idaho, formerly named Ricks College. Bowles and his wife, Nanette, are the parents of two children, one is a 10th grader in the Imbler School District and the other is an eighth grader.

Ballots for the mail election must be returned to the Union County Clerk's Office by May 18. Ballots can be mailed in or placed in ballot drop boxes. Drop boxes are outside at city halls in Cove, Elgin, Imbler, North Powder and Union. La Grande has outdoor drop boxes at Cook Memorial Library and at the Union County Clerk's Office. A third La Grande drop box is indoors at the Union County Clerk's Office.

CHURCH

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certainly going before us and doing things for our favor. ... Most indigenous groups are 'the people' and we are the people."

Speaking to the tribal drummers, who added an air of Nimiipuu authenticity to the occasion, Miles said in a motherly way, "I was telling them this morning to behave yourselves. I watched these boys grow up, so I always tell them that when they're drumming. I am so very proud of them."

NPTEC Chairman Shannon Wheeler, who headed the tribal delegation in accepting the property, was particularly moved by the experience.

"As we think about this land and our people moving from here, being forced off of this land, and the year of sorrow as we left," Wheeler said.

"As the story is told, the last Nez Perce who left looked back and thought, 'We may never see this land again.' Think about that; put yourself in that place at that time. It's who we are as the Nez Perce people and the tear that came down their face that day. We didn't do anything. All we wanted to do was live. All we wanted to do was live in peace. ... So for those tears of sorrow at that time — today, if you shed a tear that's OK because they're tears of joy now because of the land that is being gifted back to the Nimiipuu. The people's tears of sorrow on that day will be tears of joy. That memory in our blood that flows to each of us, their sorrow is felt today. Our tears of sorrow and joy today will also be felt by our ancestors in the past. That's what this means to us today. ... Our Nez Perce people will think back and look at this day and remember the Methodist Church and their



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

The former Wallowa United Methodist Church, built in 1910, was handed over to the Nez Perce Tribe, the original inhabitants of the land, Thursday, April 29, 2021, during a ceremony between church officials and the tribe.

kindness in recognizing that the first people, the Nimiipuu, and our rightful position here in this land here where we stand."

He also said the Methodist Church, the people involved in the transaction, will go in the history books alongside others who will be remembered for their kindness.

The final pastor of the church, Kaye Garver, also was on hand. She said when the church closed, the congregation consisted of but five people, down from its peak of about 200 in the 1960s-70s.

"We didn't have the money to do the needed repairs and pay the insurance," she said. "It was a sad but necessary thing. The younger people wanted to move out of the county. They wanted to go to the city and everybody else aged."

Pastor since July 1, 1999, Garver recalled coming to the church somewhat hesitantly.

"When I came here to interview for the job, I had my doubts as to whether or not this was going to work," she said. "I pulled up outside and there was an angel stained-glass window and I said, 'OK, that's my sign.' I walked in and there were three people I knew from

church camps over on the coast and I'm going, 'OK, that's my second sign.' So this is where God has led me and the church has been just fantastic people."

Garver recalled how active the church had been in the Wallowa community.

"We'd do a lot of things with the community. We'd do ... breakfasts on Memorial Day Weekend Sunday for the whole community. We would do other meals and dinners during the year for the community," she said. "On Christmas Eve, ours was the only Christmas Eve service in town. We brought in people from all denominations for that Christmas Eve service."

But she thinks it's fitting the property goes to the tribe.

"It's a joy that, although we had to leave that building when it closed, it's now going to the Nez Perce," she said.

Laurie Day, director of connectional ministries for the Oregon-Idaho Conference UMC, confirmed the desire of the church to cement its relationship with the Nez Perce in turning over ownership of the property.

"The church has a relationship with the

Nez Perce Tribe and we checked with them to see if they would like to have the building and the property because they were the original inhabitants of this land," Day said. "Today is the ceremony where we are returning the property to the Nez Perce."

She said the cash value of the property didn't even come into play.

"It was not part of our conversation in returning the property," she said. "It was out of friendship and it was the right thing to do. It was not about the financial. It wasn't part of our decision, so it didn't factor into it."

Wheeler, who headed the tribal delegation in accepting the property, and Mitchell agreed there are no certain plans for how to use the property. They said the NPTEC is expected to meet to make such plans.

"The building's old, so we're not sure if we're going to keep it," Mitchell said of the 1910 structure. "The idea is everything's sky-high right now, as far as property goes. We do have a powwow in July here so we may use this as a camping ground and let the folks use the showers and the bathrooms when the powwow's going on. We usually have it at the Tamkaliks (the Homeland Project in Wallowa)."

Miles concluded the festivities on a solemn note.

"Now I offer a prayer, in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, for this gathering that we are in as we walk and you go before us that you are leading into a place of 'peace that passeth all understanding.' As the world goes, we know there is disunity, but in this particular occasion, we are against that and we rebuke it," she said. "We thank you for what is happening with our brothers and sisters. We are grateful. We say all of this in your son's name, Jesus, the Christ, amen."



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Wyatt Baum, attorney for the city of Joseph, second from left, talks with Joseph city leaders Wednesday, April 21, 2021, following an emergency meeting of the city council. From left are Councilor Stephen Bartlow, Baum, Mayor Belinda Buswell and administrative assistant Jamie Collier.

JOSEPH

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my private life in ways that I can no longer allow to continue."

After a suggestion that council members be authorized to fill in Braden's duties until a new administrator can be hired, Councilor Lisa Collier said April 16 she was opposed to the idea.

"I actually feel that given the nature of the letter it sounds like there's some harassment from city council members. I'm not sure that I'm comfortable with giving access," she said.

Others agreed.

"I would concur with Lisa and it seems like we need more information," Councilor Tammy Jones said. "There are very clear roles for a board or a council and an administrator. It seems to me that's where we need to put some focus and figure out where are those boundaries to ensure that if there are some things that, as a council, we are doing that impacts the city (administrator) unable to do their job, then that's kind of a bigger issue. I agree that we need to get someone in to help figure some of those pieces out, and this is a really big deal."

At that time, the council

agreed to seek Baum's advice on a potential investigation over the harassment allegation. But during the emergency meeting the council declined to make public what Baum's recommendation was.

When asked directly during the public comment portion of the open session whether there would be an investigation, Buswell said, "As the presiding chair, I will say what I'll always say regarding what goes on in executive session, and that will be 'No comment.' It's just about public meeting laws and the protection of executive session."

Joseph resident Mike Lockhart wasn't satisfied with that answer.

"I've had conversations with several people about what's going on with the investigation," he said. "What concerns me is that you, as representatives of the electorate, go out and start soliciting people who would be interested in the job. I'd think this would be a negative hanging over you. I think it needs to be gotten out. I'm hoping all of these (accusations) are dismissed. That'd be the best thing in the world that somebody's making false accusations. I think somebody's got to take the leadership to put these to bed."

MUSEUM

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two bunches of celery for 25 cents, and 2 pounds of cranberries for 38 cents.

The Hanford F. Reed Lumber Co. operated for several decades until at least 1953. It was near where Elgin High School is today, according to the book "History of Elgin" by Bernal Hug. Hanford F. Reed operated the mill. He learned about Elgin in 1905 while attending the Lewis and Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition in Portland with his wife during their honeymoon. The mill under Reed's management moved to Elgin from Ladd Canyon, according to Hug's book.

Other new features at the museum include Oregon Trail paintings, historical clothes and glasses, a bar made from barn wood and a Elgin fire chief hat from decades ago. The hat complements an old bell of the Elgin Fire Department, which is outside the entry to the museum.

New features at the site include a saddle at least 90 years old inside Elgin's old jail, which the historical society renovated more than a year ago. The jail was opened to the public for the first time last fall when the museum briefly opened after being closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The jail was originally on Seventh Street



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Charlie Horn, a curator at the Elgin Museum, sifts through a book of historical photographs in the museum's reading room Saturday, May 1, 2021.

in Elgin, from 1895 to 1914. The small wooden building was moved to an Elgin farm sometime after the Elgin Opera House was built. A jail was put inside the opera house following its construction in 1912, making the older one unnecessary.

The museum is beginning its third year in its new location at 180 N. Eighth St., the former site of the Elgin City Hall, which moved to the former W.C. Construction office building in late 2018.

The museum was previously on the second floor of the Elgin Opera House. It closed in about 2007 because of space issues before reopening in the spring of 2019 after the former city

hall building became available.

Steve Oliver, a member of the Elgin Museum and Historical Society Board, said the new location is better because of the additional space it provides, allowing the museum to have a greater number of displays.

Oliver and Hopkins said they credited much of the success of the move to the tireless work of volunteers.

Those who stepped up in a big way include Charlie Horn and Dina Allen, both members of the museum board. Horn and Allen, in March, were honored as Elgin's man and woman of the year by the Elgin Chamber of Commerce. The honor saluted the work Horn and Allen did

in getting the museum reopened.

Hopkins said among the museum features that have been growing in popularity over the three years are its reading room, which includes a growing number of local history books and bound volumes of Elgin's old city newspaper, the Elgin Recorder.

The museum will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on May 9 to celebrate Mother's Day. Its regular hours will be 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. No admission will be charged May 9, but donations will be accepted.

Admission for the remainder of the spring and summer season will be \$2 per person.



Nicole Cathey

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