

Former L.A. fire commissioner seeks ouster of Pilot Rock fire district captain

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — A former Los Angeles Fire Board commissioner is calling out the Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District for allowing a man with criminal convictions to stay in its ranks.

Rebecca Ninburg also stated Herschel Rostov, the district's new fire chief, is on administrative leave due to an ongoing sexual harassment investigation.

Ninburg sent an email Wednesday, Aug. 17, to local fire officials and news outlets that addressed Jim Critchley, chief of Pendleton Fire and Ambulance Department, and Tim Weinke, president of the Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District Board of Directors.

"I'm writing because I'm deeply concerned that Fire Capt. Brian Hemphill is continuing to work for Pilot Rock Fire Protection District," she stated. "You are both aware that Capt. Hemphill has felony and misdemeanor charges, including assault and strangulation, DUI, and stealing medication from Pendleton Fire Department."

State court records show Hemphill pleaded guilty to 2013 charges of strangulation and fourth-degree assault, pleaded guilty in September 2015 to fourth-degree assault and in January 2016 pleaded guilty to driving under the influence of intoxicants. All the charges were misdemeanors



Pilot Rock Fire Chief Herschel Rostov discusses the station's air tank refill procedure Nov. 18, 2021, during a training at the fire station in Pilot Rock. Rostov has been on administrative leave since at least July 2, 2022.

and the cases were in Umatilla County. Records also show Hemphill completed probation in each case.

Nothing in the state court records verified Ninburg's theft assertion.

Critchley said Pendleton Fire has had an agreement with Pilot Rock Fire to provide administrative support since July 1, while Rostov went on administrative leave.

"The agreement is open-ended," Critchley said. "We're good neighbors. We've been part of the investigation and want to help them until their personnel issues have settled down."

Ninburg provided no information to back up the sexual harassment claim.

Critchley said he could not provide information about Hemphill's service and record because the matter is under investigation.

Weinke did not reply to a phone message and an email requesting his comments on the situation. Pilot Rock Fire Capt. Craig Beers also did not respond to a message left on the station phone.

Ninburg also noted Hemphill is listed as inactive with the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training.

"It is not only irresponsible, but it's gross negligence on your part to overlook these violations and egregious acts and allow

him to continue to work for the (Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District)," she asserted, and keeping him on violates the district's policies and procedures.

Ninburg charged that members of the community have been denied the opportunity to work as a volunteer for Pilot Rock Fire for lesser charges than those on Hemphill's legal record.

Besides her service on the Los Angeles fire commission, Ninburg co-founded the LA Derby Dolls, a volunteer-run Roller Derby league team, and the Good Deed Corps, a nonpartisan, nonprofit "committed to building a strong, engaged civil society that embodies a diversity of voice and perspective."

East Oregonian, File

Drazan rolls governor campaign into Heppner

By DAKOTA CASTETS-DIDIER
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — Christine Drazan rolled her campaign to become Oregon's first Republican governor in 40 years into Heppner on Wednesday, Aug. 17, for an ice cream social.

The event at the Christian Life Center drew several dozen people and some public officials, including Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack and fellow Republicans state Reps. Greg Smith, Heppner, and Bobby Levy, Echo.

"Getting involved in public service in the first place for me was about service," Drazan told the East Oregonian. "It was really about the opportunity to make a difference and be effective. What I learned as a legislator was that my opportunity to really change outcomes, which is really what defines effectiveness for me, was really limited."

Drazan, 50, served in the Oregon House of Representatives 2019-22 for District 39, which includes parts of Clackamas County. She also was minority leader until 2021, when she left the state House to run for governor.

"As Republican leader, my caucus members proposed a hundred amendments to various pieces of legislation, and repeatedly it was on party line vote, rejected," she said.

With Democrats holding a supermajority in the Legislature, she said, Republicans have few tools to stop proposals they opposed. It became clear, she explained, there was not going to be an opportunity for her as a Republican legislator in Oregon to work on big issues. But the governor's office offers just that.

"The governor's role is so critical and so important to provide balance and accountability," Drazan said. "In single party control, if you're in a state with only one party everywhere you look, you really don't have the kind of accountability that I think Oregonians want right now."

She criticized the "one-

size-fits-all" approach in Oregon government. Some rules and expectations that might be workable and culturally aligned in the more metro and suburban parts of our state instead affect the ability of rural Oregonians to support their families and lives.

To get to Mahonia Hall, Drazan has to defeat Democrat Tina Kotek, who served as the speaker of the Oregon House 2013-22, and Betsy Johnson, a longtime Democratic Oregon legislator now running an unaffiliated campaign.

As part of her campaign's "Roadmap for Oregon's Future," a six-page

list of issues and proposed solutions she would implement as governor, Drazan described a series of "political agendas and bureaucratic hurdles" that interfere

with Oregon's agricultural community.

"Sometimes we're talking about banning the equipment that they use in the fields, like diesel bans," she said.

Drazan has also been vocal about her support for changing Oregon's education system, citing a low overall high school graduation rate (80.6%) as a mandate for change. According to Drazan's "Roadmap," this includes focusing on academic accountability and "keeping politics out of the classroom." She said graduation requirements that were rolled back during the pandemic should be reinstated.

"I believe that those were positive, not negative for our kiddos, and that our expectations should be higher, not lower," she said.

And students who are members of minorities already face numerous cultural and social challenges, she said, and while there have been leaders focused on addressing some of the social and emotional dynamics within schools, they failed to actually help those students obtain an education.

Drazan campaigned all week in Eastern Oregon, including stops at Burns, Ontario, Baker City, John Day and Fossil.



Drazan

Convoy of military vehicles to stop in Baker City

Trip will continue on to Wallowa County

By CLAYTON FRANKE
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Dan McCluskey is heading for Baker City in his three-quarter-ton Vietnam-era M37 cargo truck.

But his rig — along with the 32 other military vehicles he's traveling with — won't be delivering any cargo.

Instead, McCluskey describes the convoy as a moving museum.

"Our goal is to show everybody how the military used their vehicles. They see military vehicles in museums on static display, but we're out there to show them how they used them in motion," McCluskey said. "We're putting hundreds of miles on them, day in, day out. This is how they moved them in convoy order."

McCluskey, a member of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association, is the convoy commander for the 2022 MVPA Northwest Parks Motor Convoy, which is scheduled to arrive in Baker City on Wednesday, Aug. 24, and spend the night at the Baker County Fairgrounds north of Campbell Street between Grove and East streets.

McCluskey said the convoy is "fully on track for all of the scheduled stops."

"We encourage the public to come out and visit," McCluskey said. "We'll be camping right there on the fairgrounds, so we're gonna have about 33 military vehicles there for them to walk around, talk to our people, look at the vehicles."

All the vehicles are

privately owned by the people participating in the convoy, who are all MVPA members.

Founded in 1976, MVPA is a nonprofit with more than 100 affiliates worldwide "dedicated to providing an international organization for military vehicle enthusiasts, historians, preservationists and collectors interested in the acquisition, restoration, preservation, safe operation and public education of historic military transport," according to its mission.

McCluskey estimated that about 30%, and maybe more, of the participants in this year's convoy are military veterans.

When the convoy reaches Baker City it will be the 11th day of a 15-day, 1,600-mile historical loop taking the convoy through Idaho, Washington and Oregon.

Parts of the loop overlap with a longer, 6,350-mile highway the National Parks Service established in 1924 — the National Park-to-Park Highway — that encompasses all the national parks in the 11 western states.

Occasionally, McCluskey said, members from MVPA affiliations along the route join in for segments of the journey. MVPA has affiliate clubs in Woodland, Washington, and in Wilsonville.

McCluskey said the vehicles — from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm and current eras — can't travel faster than 35 miles per hour.

"That's our max speed," he said. "A lot of times it's a lot less because we are

going up over hills. These old military vehicles are definitely not doing 60 miles per hour going over the grades."

Three units make up the convoy during travel: The "heavies," 1.5- through 5-ton vehicles, lead the charge, followed by 3/4-ton Dodge cargo trucks, followed by the jeep unit.

McCluskey said they travel anywhere from 85 to 170 miles per day.

This 1,600-mile trip isn't the longest McCluskey and the MVPA have completed. They traveled the Lincoln military highway, which spans from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco, in 2009, and completed the Bankhead Route from D.C. to Seattle in 2015. They also drove from Seattle to Plymouth Rock last year.



McCluskey said people usually show their support when they see the convoy.

"Along the way, we'll have people out at the end of their driveways, waving flags, waiting for the convoy to go by," he said.

The convoy will leave the Baker County Fairgrounds at 7 a.m. Aug. 25 and stop in Oxbow, at the Oregon/Idaho border, for lunch. It will then head north for an afternoon display in Joseph and spend the night at the Eagle Cap Shooters Association in Enterprise.

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Grande Ronde Hospital & Clinics proudly welcomes Tracy Epperson, MD—Psychiatrist



Before earning her medical degree, Dr. Epperson devoted more than 20 years to working as a sign language interpreter. Working with the deaf community to help address their unique mental health needs is a professional passion of hers.

Another professional focus is nutritional psychiatry, and teaching people how strongly diet and lifestyle influence mental health.

Dr. Epperson's broad list of personal interests include hiking, kayaking, reading, photography, crocheting, and gardening.

Please help us welcome Dr. Epperson and her family to our Community!!



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