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OUR VIEW

Time is now to file for Pendleton seats

Pendleton residents interested in serving out the final year of Jane Hill's city council term have only a few days to throw their hat in the ring.

They should still consider it. Because though Pendleton City Council currently has five choices for the seat, there are few good ones.

Thankfully, Umatilla County Assessment and Taxation director Paul Chalmers put his name into the mix on Tuesday. As a fiscally responsible, community-oriented person who is familiar with the problems Pendleton city government is facing, Chalmers would be a good choice for a fill-in position.

The city must feel lucky to have at least one good option, because for a while it looked like the council was between a rock and a hard place. They would have needed to choose a replacement from a quartet that included a man convicted of a hate crime and another who is actively working to a remove a sitting councilor.

Both would clearly be terrible

additions to the council.

Pendleton City Council is heading into a season of dramatic change. Next year, five seats — including the mayor's — could be filled by new faces. That's a majority of the council, and such a powerful wave of new thought can have deep effects.

But so far, a wave of qualified candidates have not stepped forward to campaign for those seats.

Pendleton police Chief Stuart Roberts aptly noted Wednesday: "If you're doing the job the right way, you'll have people in leadership positions." He was talking about Pendleton police, but may as well have been talking about Pendleton city government.

It's clear Pendleton needs to rebound off the floor into more active, engaged civic life. Let's hope it happens now, before voters have to learn a hard lesson about how important city council seats can be.

The deadline to apply for Hill's at-large seat is Feb. 15 at 4 p.m. at city hall.

The deadline is Monday to apply to finish former councilor Jane Hill's term.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

OTHER VIEWS

Readers should wait for facts on Finicum's death

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

After the shooting death of Robert "LaVoy" Finicum, one of the occupiers of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, social and mainstream media sites lit up with rumors, speculations and allegations.

People claiming to be eye witnesses, or to have talked to eyewitnesses, insisted that Finicum was shot in the face, while kneeling on the ground, with his hands in the air.

The FBI took the unusual step of releasing unedited aerial video of the shooting. The special agent in charge of the FBI in Oregon said: "We know there are various versions of what occurred during this event: most inaccurate, some inflammatory. To that end, we want to do what we can to lay out an honest and unfiltered view of what happened and how it happened."

While the video put paid to some of the alleged facts, showing for example that Finicum was not kneeling with his hands on his head when he was shot, it became something of a Rorschach test. Many people saw in it what they wanted to see.

Some said it proved that officers had acted properly, that Finicum was reaching toward a pocket that held a loaded gun. Others said it showed he was reaching across his body to regain his balance in the deep snow.

At least one viewer insisted that Finicum was reaching first to his hip, in response to a gunshot wound, and then to his shoulder, in response to a second gunshot wound — although police have not said where, or how many times, Finicum was shot. Finicum's family reportedly obtained a private autopsy but

has not released the results.

Some viewers of the video purport to know what Finicum was saying to officers, although there is no audio on the video, which was shot from a police airplane overhead.

One person riding in the truck where Finicum had been riding claimed that more than 100 shots were fired into the truck, although none of the occupants were hit and the truck did not appear to be riddled with bullet holes.

While some of these "eyewitness accounts" quietly faded away after the video was released, others continue to spread, usually as part of a call to action.

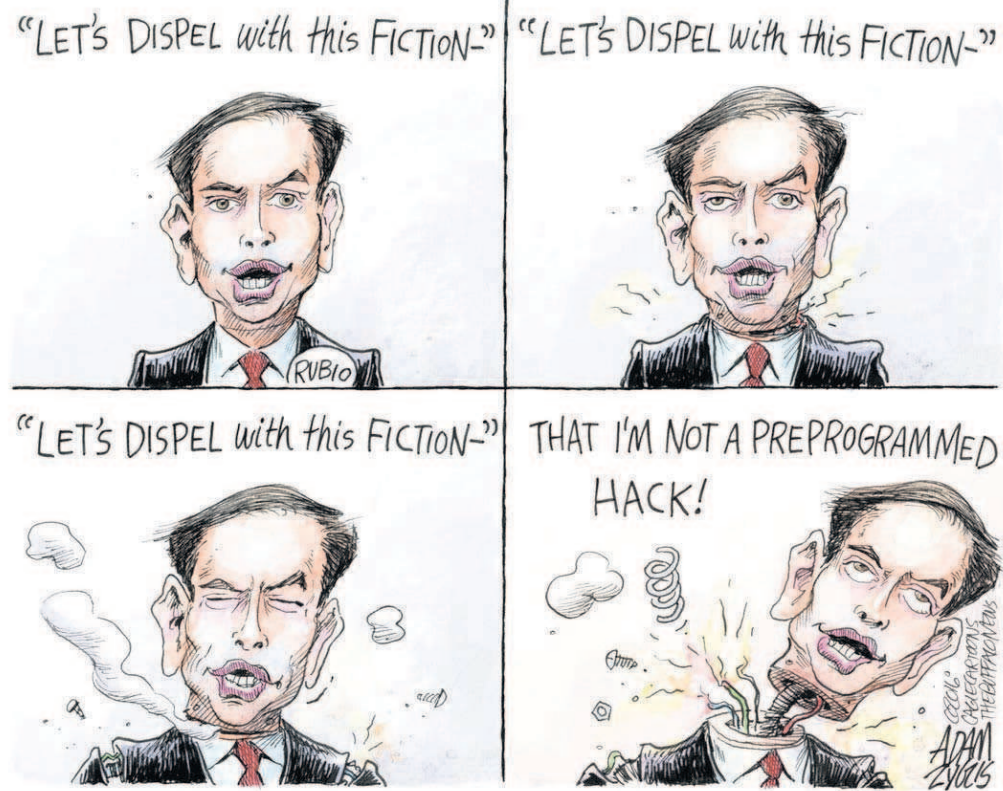
An official investigation of the shooting, which was by an Oregon State Police trooper, is now underway, in accordance with state law.

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office is leading the investigation, with help from the Bend Police Department, Redmond Police Department, and Oregon State Police.

Everyone else should wait for the results of this investigation, and information that will surface in court hearings for the occupiers who have been arrested, before rushing to judgment.

The people of Harney County have reacted with great grace and restraint in response to the influx of occupiers, protesters and counter-protesters, and media into their community. They did not seek this spotlight, nor have they indicated they welcome it. Quite the contrary.

At this point, they deserve to be left alone while the legal and public safety systems deal with the remaining few occupiers and complete the official investigation.



OTHER VIEWS

I miss Barack Obama

As this primary season has gone along, a strange sensation has come over me: I miss Barack Obama. Now, obviously I disagree with a lot of Obama's policy decisions. I've been disappointed by aspects of his presidency. I hope the next presidency is a philosophic departure.

But over the course of this campaign it feels as if there's been a decline in behavioral standards across the board. Many of the traits of character and leadership that Obama possesses, and that maybe we have taken too much for granted, have suddenly gone missing or are in short supply.

The first and most important of these is basic integrity. The Obama administration has been remarkably scandal-free. Think of the way Iran-Contra or the Lewinsky scandals swallowed years from Reagan and Clinton.

We've had very little of that from Obama. He and his staff have generally behaved with basic rectitude. Hillary Clinton is constantly having to hold these defensive press conferences when she's trying to explain away some vaguely shady shortcut she's taken, or decision she has made, but Obama has not had to do that.

He and his wife have not only displayed superior integrity themselves, they have mostly attracted and hired people with high personal standards. There are all sorts of unsightly characters floating around politics, including in the Clinton camp and in Gov. Chris Christie's administration. This sort has been blocked from team Obama.

Second, a sense of basic humanity. Donald Trump has spent much of this campaign vowing to block Muslim immigration. You can only say that if you treat Muslim Americans as an abstraction. Obama, meanwhile, went to a mosque, looked into people's eyes and gave a wonderful speech reasserting their place as Americans.

He's exuded this basic care and respect for the dignity of others time and time again. Let's put it this way: Imagine if Barack and Michelle Obama joined the board of a charity you're involved in. You'd be happy to have such people in your community. Could you say that comfortably about Ted Cruz? The quality of a president's humanity flows out in the unexpected but important moments.

Third, a soundness in his decision-making process. Over the years I have spoken to many members of this administration who were disappointed that the president didn't take their advice. But those disappointed staffers almost always felt that their views had been considered in depth.

Obama's basic approach is to promote his values as much as he can within the limits



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

of the situation. Bernie Sanders, by contrast, has been so blinded by his values that the reality of the situation does not seem to penetrate his mind.

Take health care. Passing Obamacare was a mighty lift that led to two gigantic midterm election defeats. As Megan McArdle pointed out in her Bloomberg View column, Obamacare took coverage away from only a small minority of Americans. Sanderscare would take employer coverage away from tens of millions of satisfied customers, destroy the health insurance business and levy massive new tax hikes. This is epic social disruption.

To think you could pass Sanderscare through a polarized Washington and in a country deeply suspicious of government is to live in intellectual fairyland. Obama may have been too cautious, especially in the Middle East, but at least he's able to grasp the reality of the situation.

Obama radiates an ethos of integrity, humanity, good manners and elegance.

Fourth, grace under pressure. I happen to find it charming that Marco Rubio gets nervous on the big occasions — that he grabs for the bottle of water, breaks out in a sweat and went robotic in the last debate. It shows Rubio is a normal person. And I happen to think

overconfidence is one of Obama's great flaws. But a president has to maintain equipoise under enormous pressure. Obama has done that, especially amid the financial crisis. After Saturday night, this is now an open question about Rubio.

Fifth, a resilient sense of optimism. To hear Sanders or Trump, Cruz and Ben Carson campaign is to wallow in the pornography of pessimism, to conclude that this country is on the verge of complete collapse. That's simply not true. We have problems, but they are less serious than those faced by just about any other nation on earth.

People are motivated to make wise choices more by hope and opportunity than by fear, cynicism, hatred and despair. Unlike many current candidates, Obama has not appealed to those passions.

No, Obama has not been temperamentally perfect. Too often he's been disdainful, aloof, resentful and insular. But there is a tone of ugliness creeping across the world, as democracies retreat, as tribalism mounts, as suspiciousness and authoritarianism take center stage. Obama radiates an ethos of integrity, humanity, good manners and elegance that I'm beginning to miss, and that I suspect we will all miss a bit, regardless of who replaces him.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

YOUR VIEWS

Rep. Walden on wrong side of Malheur occupation

An open letter to U.S. Rep Greg Walden:

I've read with interest your recent guest column. You take the focus off Hammond, Bundy and the armed thugs who are the real culprits, and you shift the blame onto the BLM, the Forest Service, even the President. Bingo! It's all the fault of the arrogant federal government.

Lots of us in Eastern Oregon have complaints against the Forest Service and BLM. And we have frustrations with you in the Congress too, for the high taxes you've caused by unfunded wars, high agricultural subsidies and low grazing rates.

But we don't carry our guns into your office and occupy it. No, you don't condone the actions of the armed occupiers or the "mistakes" the Hammonds committed. But you don't condemn their crimes either. The Hammonds, you say, made a mistake.

Not a federal crime, mind you, just a mistake. Ask any judge, ask any prosecutor or probation officer. How many times have they heard criminals describe their crimes as "mistakes"? Criminals shift the blame and minimize the wrong. You're doing the same.

Lovely words, "those not familiar with the high desert of the West," make it sound as though Bundy, his friends, and the Hammonds are victims of those far-away city folk from New York or Washington, or even Portland.

You ignore the jury of high desert folks from Eastern Oregon, who do understand the culture and the lifestyle of the great American West, who also live in this vast beautiful harsh landscape, who — after two weeks of hearing evidence — convicted Hammond of desecrating this beautiful land by intentionally setting fires while he and his hunting party were illegally killing deer, not as part of the "culture and the lifestyle of the great American West" but as part of the tradition of "take the law into your own hands," take game when you want, burn the land when you want.

If only a couple of jurors had believed the Hammonds, there would have been no conviction. But after two weeks of evidence and testimony, the Hammonds' Eastern Oregon peers found them guilty, not of making a mistake but of committing crimes.

Well done, congressman. You're siding with the right people. And your article only encourages criminals like Bundy and Finicum.

Martin J. Birnbaum, retired district attorney and public defender, La Grande

LETTERS POLICY

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