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OUR VIEW

Remaking Pendleton City Council

It's fantastic to see so many competitive races for Pendleton City Council. Lots of names, lots of bubbles to fill in or skip over, lots of multi-colored signs decorating Pendleton yards in each of its wards.

But that also means more responsibility rests on voters, who must parse and pick between quality candidates.

But no need to feel overwhelmed. The *East Oregonian* editorial board sat down with all 13 candidates still vying for seats on city council. We recorded those interviews, which you can listen to on our website and on iTunes. They allow you to hear each candidate in their own words, responding to questions and prompts from the edit board.

You're welcome to come to your own conclusion after listening to them all. But if you'd like to hear what we took from those interviews, read on.

Ward 1

With such a posse of new cowboys gunning for council seats, one could be tempted to kick the whole old guard out of town.

Becky Marks is the incumbent in Ward 1, the only woman running an active campaign in council elections.

Her votes to keep the public from having a voice on marijuana policy in the city, and her promise to ignore them if they overturn the city's temporary ban, is troublesome and undemocratic.

But there is no better option this time around.

Challenger James Tibbets has a troubled history of his own. He's a better person now than he was when convicted of a hate crime, but not ready to take a leadership role in Pendleton.

Ward 2

Hardworking and energetic Chuck Wood decided not to run for re-election, which means it's a wide open race to fill his well-worn shoes.

We think Scott Fairley is the best fit.

He is a good communicator, both willing to listen and willing to throw out ideas, has government experience and — at 49 and with a child still in college — provides a necessary and long missing perspective on the council. We have confidence he will take the job seriously.

Bob Ehmann has had eight years on city council, from 1992-2000, and the electorate would be better served by bringing new voices into the fold. Ehmann is a good fit on his many boards and commissions.

City council meetings are better when Rex Morehouse is involved. But we think he is more useful to the city when reliably questioning councilors during the public comment section rather than being another body on the dais. We think he enjoys that more than being a councilor, too.

Ward 3

Tom Young decided not to run for another term in Ward 3. Three candidates are in the running to replace him.

Dale Primmer is clearly the best choice.

He's thought long and hard about the issues facing Pendleton and, of the candidates most likely to win the election, comes in with the clearest vision of how to bring changes. Setting goals and holding people accountable to meeting them, although not flashy on yard signs, is the kind of no-excuses expectations that the city needs to set.

It's great to see young Cody Cimmiyotti throw his hat in the ring, but we think he's better off starting his political career the long way, on one of the many city committees and/or nonprofit boards, building relationships and collecting knowledge and experience. Hopefully his name will be on the ballot in future elections.

Don Bennett did not separate himself from his competitors, nor from the council's general naysayers.

At-Large

In what may be the toughest decision on the ballot, we tabbed Paul Chalmers to hold onto the seat he had previously been chosen to fill.

If you remember, Jane Hill left this seat not long ago, and Chalmers beat out a crowded field to get the nod from the current council. He hasn't had much time to distinguish himself yet, but is a strong fiscal voice with deep knowledge of the inner workings of local government. His voice and perspective are valuable on the council.

Rick Rohde would make an excellent councilor too. Perhaps no candidate spends as much time caring for the city of Pendleton than he does — not just when collecting litter from city streets, but attending council meetings and sparking community discussion on the pages of this newspaper. He has a clear approach to political issues and is not afraid to look askance at things the city has been doing for years without thinking twice about. Like Morehouse, he is a benefit to the city each time he shows up at city hall.

Paul Rabitaille was among the most enjoyable candidates to talk with, but he lacked concrete and workable ideas to move the city forward.

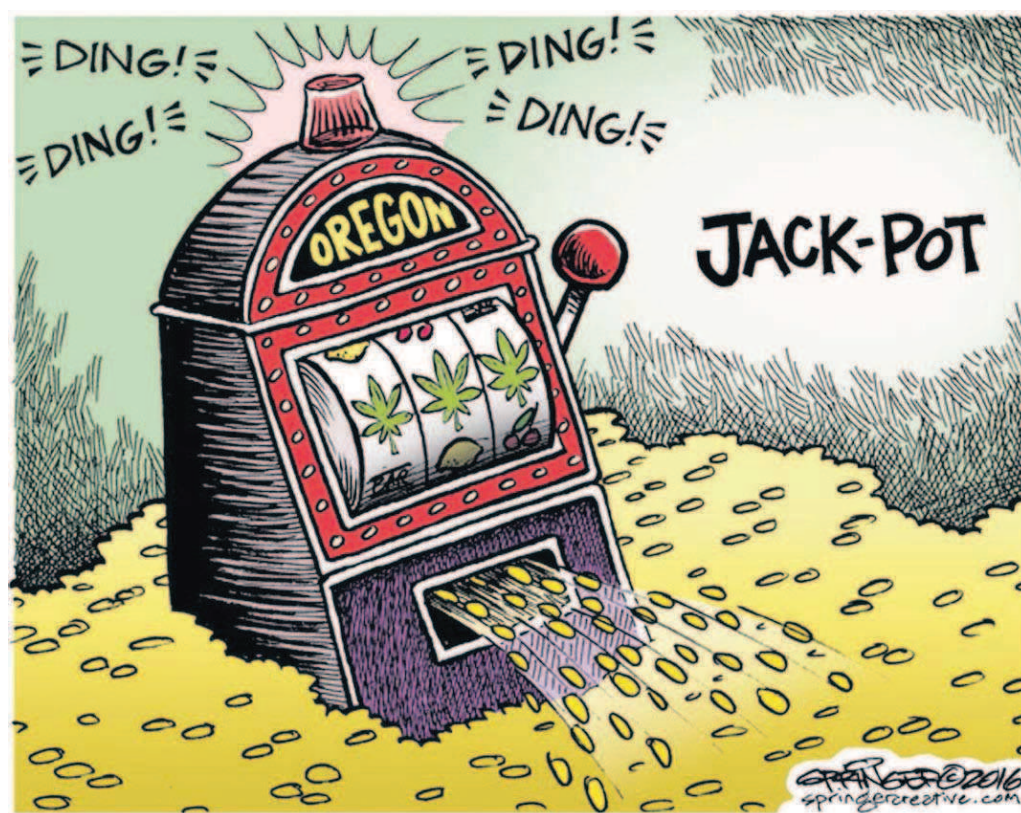
Mayor

John Turner is running unopposed for the position after longtime officeholder Phillip Houk decided not to try for another term.

Turner has a long history in Pendleton, earning respect and building connections in numerous local institutions. That will be to his advantage.

Running unopposed means Turner hasn't had to lay out much of a campaign. He has used his time to praise the current mayor and council and talk about the good things going in Pendleton. And though there are many, Turner may be surprised to see the seriousness with which new faces want to make changes to Pendleton and how its government operates. We hope he's willing to be part of that and help make this election a turning point for a city that has been stuck in idle.

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

José Martí, the national poet

HAVANA — Many nations have attempted the transition from revolutionary socialism toward some form of democratic capitalism; Cuba just happens to be the final one.

The country has many things going against it as tries to make the journey. It suffers from the dysfunctions that afflict countries that have giant bureaucratic states lying heavy on society. Those at the top have been trained all their lives to regulate and control. The governing elites speak (at great length) in lifeless ideological jargon.

The current government slogan — not without haste, but without pause — suggests a steady reform process, but in fact the old people running this effort are halting and glacial. The world is changing Cuba faster than the Cuban state can cope.

The neighborhoods feel warmer and more communal than those in many other nations, but there are certainly a lot of young men lethargically hanging about all day without much to do.

Independent civic institutions are scarce. The young people, local scholars say, are disillusioned with all systems. They hope technology will save them, or moving abroad will.

But there is one big thing Cuba definitely has going for it: national pride. One encounters a fierce love of country, a sense of national solidarity and a confident patriotic spirit that is today lacking in the United States.

The patriotism has prickly manifestations. Cuban officials drop random Bay of Pigs references into their conversations with Americans, just for the ornery satisfaction of it. There is also a pervasive (and sometimes completely unhelpful) sense of Cuban exceptionalism; the idea is that no other model quite fits Cuba because the place is so remarkably distinct.

But there are glorious manifestations. A lot of that national pride is based on cultural achievements. I am here with the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, part of President Barack Obama's reconciliation with Cuba. Musicians like Smokey Robinson, Dave Matthews, Joshua Bell, John Lloyd Young and Usher and creative types like playwright John Guare and choreographer Martha Clarke, got to interact with their Cuban counterparts, while government officials negotiated future exchanges.

This is the way to see Cuba at its best. The artistic community is consistently dazzling. It's not only the high artistic standards. There is a radiating joy in performance that glows out of each artist, a blaze from something deep in the Cuban soul.

But Cuban national pride has another



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

source: the 19th-century poet and journalist José Martí. I was amazed how much Martí's name came up in conversation here and how little Fidel Castro's did. Martí is the national poet, the one who shifted the national imagination, who told Cubans who they were and what their story was. He inspired a common faith in a dignified future.

One foundation head told me: "When I'm depressed I try to read something Martí wrote. He's a father who embraces you. I think he engages the best of Cuba."

Cuba's patriotism has prickly manifestations.

Brooklyn Bridge. He excelled at prose, poetry and political organization. He died in battle, fighting for Cuban independence from Spain.

He also taught through his writing, which is quoted on all sides. He believed in an independent Cuba, a moderate and democratic political system with protections to tame capitalism. His love of Cuba caused him to love all Cubans. He spent much of his life trying to unite and reconcile them. "Absolute ideas must take relative forms if they are not to fail," he wrote.

But he was not primarily a systematic or programmatic thinker. "The problem of independence is not a change in form but a change in spirit," he believed. He fired patriotism and self-confidence. He found inner fulfillment by serving a national project and envisioning a national purpose.

It's hard to be too optimistic about Cuba's short-term future. The leaders are trying to square the mother of all circles — to have a rich society but without rich people; to have an entrepreneurial class but without losing the egalitarian solidarity; to have revolutionary socialism and also outside investment and growth, risk-taking and enterprise.

But it's exciting to see a nation that has a palpable sense of its own soul. It's interesting to see what a powerful force a national poet can be. Long dead, Martí is a precious resource who unifies amid disagreement and fortifies in hard times.

Every nation needs to know who it is and what its collective story is. I wonder if the current U.S. malaise has something to do with the way we have lost touch with our own national poets, or even a common sense of who they might be.

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

YOUR VIEWS

Lieuallen's character sets him apart in circuit court race

As a lawyer practicing in Umatilla County, I am very concerned about the quality and character of the two candidates for judge in Umatilla County Circuit Court. I have known both candidates for many years and have had several cases with both of them. Both Jon Lieuallen and John Ballard have the education and legal experience for the job of circuit court judge. However, they could not be more different as persons.

Lieuallen is a home-grown family man from this area, with four busy kids involved in all kinds of activities. His wife is a medical professional here also. He comes from a farming/ranching background and has family roots deep in our community. His hard-work ethic has made him compassionate and generous with his time and able to work with a diverse population under difficult circumstances.

Ballard, by contrast, portrays none of these things. His scorched-earth litigation style is damaging and unnecessary. It's also unprofessional. I was not at all surprised to learn of his close call before the Oregon Supreme Court in 2014, when he went to trial on a Bar complaint alleging several violations of Oregon rules of ethics.

While Ballard was ultimately not found in violation of the rules, his conduct and judgment so negatively impressed the trial panel that it stated on the second page of the opinion, immediately after stating that Ballard was acquitted of the charges: "However, it should be made clear that the trial panel unanimously disapproves of Ballard's conduct... The claim by Ballard of 'I owed no duty to the wife' rang hollow with the trial panel.... The trial panel found it offensive for Ballard, as an attorney and officer of the court, to be directly involved in surreptitiously taking and holding the vehicle used by wife, no matter the rationale offered."

This is not the kind of person I want deciding difficult and painful dissolution and custody cases or any other kind of case, for that matter. Skating on very thin ice ethically and morally is not a talent I admire in a lawyer, much less a judge.

I am voting for Jon Lieuallen for Circuit Court Judge. His experience with prosecution, defense, and serving as pro tem judge gives him a fair and balanced approach to the law. Lieuallen is a man of high moral character and integrity who will bring honor and professionalism to his courtroom. He is a person worthy of respect and of your vote.

Kittee Custer
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

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