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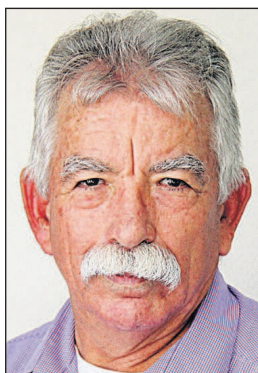
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**OUR VIEW**

# Five choices, only four chairs

After a major shakeup four years ago, it seems the tone of Hermiston politics is back to where it was before. In the at-large city council election of 2012, when four seats were up for grabs, a field of eight candidates filed for the job. There was displeasure about the handling of former police chief Dan Coulombe, who resigned in February of that year after 13 months of paid leave and was found by an outside investigator to have fostered a culture of fear within the department that went unaddressed for years. On top of that, there was frustration about a city council that met for just a few minutes every other week to perform the perfunctory duties of a public body, but didn't discuss, much less disagree, on any aspect of the city's operation. A recall was attempted in 2012 against half the council and the mayor, but failed. In the November election four newcomers made the case that change was needed, and two — John Kirwan and Doug Primmer — were elected to the council. The culture shifted. Council meetings became a more potent discussion of the city's path forward. New committees formed to get the public involved with the process. New initiatives and ideas were publicly championed and debated by councilors instead of merely approved by them.



**Manuel Gutierrez**

But as much as things are different, at least one thing is back to the way it was: our at-large election is a choice between five people — four incumbents and one newcomer. In the three elections prior to 2012, the ballot also included just four or five options for four seats. Voters will be asked to select four of the five, effectively making this an odd-man-out ballot. The *East Oregonian* editorial board sat down with the five candidates this week, but didn't feel any of the candidates rose to the "must-elect" category, or earned the "don't elect" tag. So instead of endorsing which four to put on the council — or which candidate to toss — we'll give a brief synopsis of each and how they would fit on the council if elected.



**Rod Hardin**

• **Manuel Gutierrez** has become an important voice on the council as a surrogate for poor citizens, often asking aloud at meetings what the effect of new costs and fees will have on those with small or fixed incomes. He said he believes the city has been warranted in its aggressive approach to development in the last four years with projects such as the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, Harkenrider Center and Northeast Oregon Water Association. If you're looking out for the little guy in this growing city, Gutierrez is your man.

• **Rod Hardin** is the longest serving councilor. He is looking to take on one last term to complete the transition from former city manager Ed Brookshier to Byron Smith. He's deeply knowledgeable and widely connected (nearly three decades on the council will do that), and said he is concerned that if too many councilors had individual agendas it would bring a stalemate to the "team." But he was also silent member of that "team" when Hermiston government was facing serious problems. If you're looking for experience, plenty good and some bad, Hardin should get your vote.



**Doug Primmer**

fits the bill. • **Doug Primmer** represents the everyman, and goes out of his way to set aside personal views for what the voters want. For instance, despite his wariness about marijuana, he agreed to put retail sales to the voters this fall. He told us he wants to make the city what people want it to be. He's most proud of the city's planned bus agreement with Kayak coming in January, and the fact that he has only missed two council meetings in four years. If you're looking for that kind of show-up-and-do-the-job ethic, Primmer is your man.

• **Mark Gomolski** is the newcomer to the field, and to Hermiston. He spent his career in government in Chicago and surrounding Cook County and retired to Hermiston in 2015, quickly joining the political arena here as Umatilla County Commissioner Bill Elfering's campaign manager. He indicated he's more than willing to vote against the majority. Gomolski said he voted against the West Umatilla County Fire District consolidation in the spring, and said he has serious questions about the recently approved city bus service and another Hermiston schools bond. If you're looking for a councilor who is somewhere on the spectrum between contrarian and cynic, Gomolski fits.



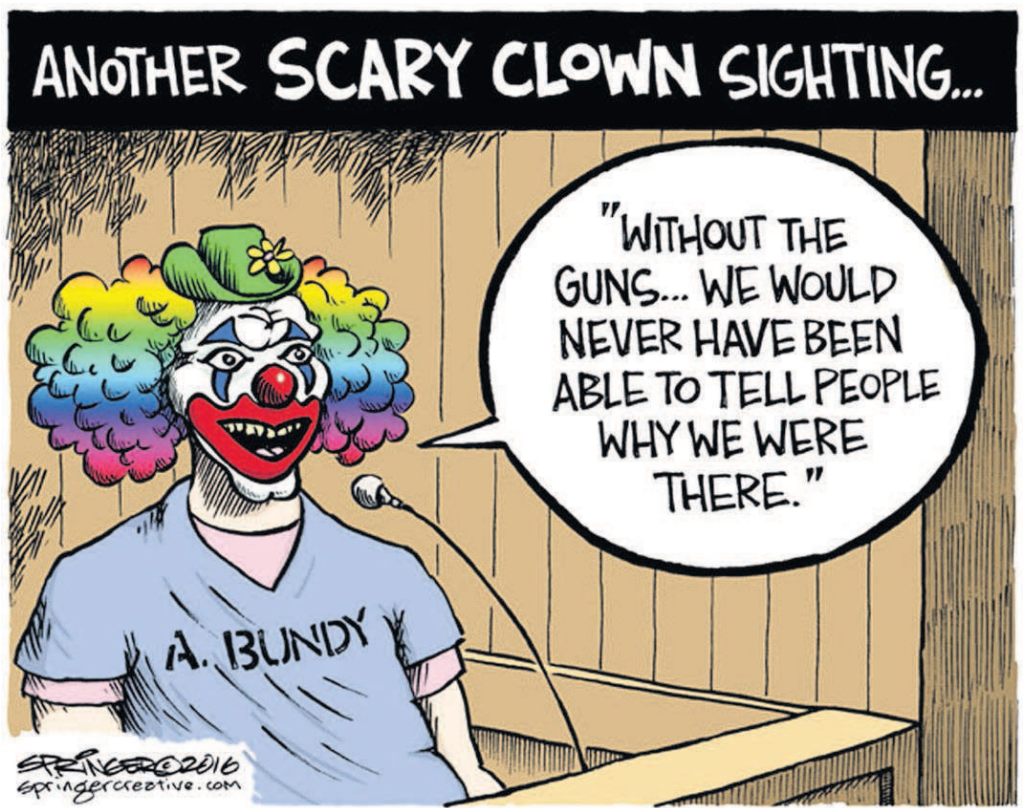
**John Kirwan**

• **John Kirwan** came onto the council ready to tangle, and for the first part of his term butted heads as he learned the process. But as he has developed in his seat, Kirwan has been more careful to pick his battles and learned to work as part of a team while maintaining a unique viewpoint. He said the next nine months are crucial to EOTEC's success, and he wants the city to be a more active and engaged participant in that process. If you want a more hands on and impassioned approach to city governance, Kirwan



**Mark Gomolski**

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**

## Intimacy for the avoidant

Over the past generation there seems to have been a decline in the number of high-quality friendships.

In 1985, most Americans told pollsters that they had about three confidants, people with whom they could share everything. Today, the majority of people say they have about two. In 1985, 10 percent of Americans said they had no one to fully confide in, but by the start of this century 25 percent of Americans said that.

All of this has left people wondering if technology is making us lonelier. Instead of going over to the neighbor's house, are we sitting at home depressingly surfing everybody else's perfect lives on Facebook?

Over the past decade, the best research has suggested that no, technology and social media are not making us lonelier. These things are tools. It's what you bring to Facebook that matters. Socially engaged people use it to further engage; lonely people use it to mask loneliness.

As Stephen Marche put it in *The Atlantic* in 2012, "Using social media doesn't create new social networks; it just transfers established networks from one platform to another."

But recently, people's views of social media have grown a bit darker. That's because we seem to be hitting some sort of saturation level. Being online isn't just something we do. It has become who we are, transforming the very nature of the self.

Earlier this year, Jacob Weisberg had a fine essay in *The New York Review of Books* reporting that, according to a British study, we check our phones on average 221 times a day — about every 4.3 minutes.

A decade ago almost no one had a smartphone. Now the average American spends 5 1/2 hours a day with digital media, and the young spend far more time. A study of female students at Baylor University found that they spent 10 hours a day on their phones.

A lot of this traffic is driven by the fear of missing out. Somebody may be posting something on Snapchat that you'd like to know about, so you'd better constantly be checking. The traffic is also driven by what the industry executives call "captology." The apps generate small habitual behaviors, like swiping right or liking a post, that generate ephemeral dopamine bursts. Any second that you're feeling bored, lonely or anxious, you feel this deep hunger to open an app and get that burst.

Last month, Andrew Sullivan published a moving and much-discussed essay in *New York* magazine titled "I Used to Be a Human Being" about what it's like to have your soul hollowed



**DAVID BROOKS**  
Comment

by the web. "By rapidly substituting virtual reality for reality," Sullivan wrote, "we are diminishing the scope of [intimate] interaction even as we multiply the number of people with whom we interact. We remove or drastically filter all the information we might get by being with another person. We reduce them to some outlines — a Facebook 'friend,' an Instagram photo, a text message — in a controlled and sequestered world that exists largely free of the sudden eruptions or encumbrances of actual human interaction. We become each other's 'contacts,' efficient shadows of ourselves."

**The average American spends 5 1/2 hours a day with digital media, and the young spend far more time.**

At saturation level, social media reduces the amount of time people spend in uninterrupted solitude, the time when people can excavate and process their internal states. It encourages social multitasking: You're with the people you're with, but you're also monitoring the 6 billion other people who might be communicating something more interesting from far away. It flattens the range of emotional experiences.

As Louis C.K. put it in a TV appearance, "You never feel completely sad or completely happy. You just feel kinda satisfied with your products. And then you die."

Perhaps phone addiction is making it harder to be the sort of person who is good at deep friendship. In lives that are already crowded and stressful, it's easier to let banter crowd out emotional presence. There are a thousand ways online to divert with a joke or a happy face emoticon. You can have a day of happy touch points without any of the scary revelations, or the boring, awkward or uncontrollable moments that constitute actual intimacy. When Montaigne was describing the accumulating intimacy he enjoyed with his best friend, he described an emotional interaction that was full and progressive: "It was not one special consideration, nor two, nor three, nor four, nor a thousand; it was some mysterious quintessence of all this mixture which possessed itself of my will and led it to plunge and lose itself in his; which possessed his whole will and led it, with a similar hunger, and a like impulse, to plunge and lose itself in mine."

When we're addicted to online life, every moment is fun and diverting, but the whole thing is profoundly unsatisfying. I guess a modern version of heroism is regaining control of social impulses, saying no to a thousand shallow contacts for the sake of a few daring plunges.

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

**YOUR VIEWS**

### Trump's immigration policies would make country safer

Donald J. Trump in his campaign for president has identified illegal immigration and the crimes committed by illegal immigrants as significant problems facing our country. Trump has an immigration plan centered on national security and public safety.

Any concerned citizen voter who wants to validate Trump's stand on illegal immigrant crime can simply go to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons inmates statistics website and add up the most recent numbers on inmate citizenship.

It indicates 42,401 prisoners in the federal prison system were foreign nationals; that's over 22 percent of federal prison population. In the federal prison system there were 28,264 Mexican nationals incarcerated; they were 66.7 percent of the foreign nationals in federal prisons.

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons breaks down the federal prison population into 13 types of offenses. Federal prisons had 15,990 inmates, 8.8 percent, incarcerated for immigration crimes.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has two components, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

and U.S. Customs and Border Protection that are at the forefront of enforcing federal immigration law.

Two groups, the National Immigration and Customs Enforcement Council, the union of ICE officers, and the National Border Patrol Council, the union of CBP Agents, have endorsed Donald J. Trump for President of the United States of America.

David Olen Cross  
Salem

### Oregon residents should receive Oregon TV stations

As a subscriber to a satellite television provider in Wallowa, my "local" stations come from Spokane. This provides me with zero information as to what is important in Oregon. If not for OPB radio, not TV, I would get no information concerning what is happening in my state.

I have looked to elected officials and others that I thought were in position to do something to fix this but have only been disappointed.

Two questions: Am I the only person effected by this blackout who cares? And what is it going to take to get this corrected?

Roger Eagan  
Wallowa