

UMATILLA



EO file photo

Umatilla voters passed a \$10.5 million bond measure that will fund improvements at every school in the district.

Voters approve school bond

Will improve all schools in district

East Oregonian

Umatilla voters passed a \$10.5 million bond measure by an unofficial vote of 661 to 572.

Schools superintendent Heidi Sipe reacted Tuesday night to the news with elation.

"I'm very appreciative to the Umatilla voters," Sipe said. "I'm excited to see the improvements their support brings to Umatilla students."

The green light by voters means the district can access not only the \$10.5 million in bond funds, but also \$4 million from the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program.

Bond proceeds will fund improvements at every school in the district —

McNary Heights Elementary School, Clara Brownell Middle School and Umatilla High School. All three will receive new roofs, updated heating and cooling systems and security upgrades with cameras and electronic alarms.

The aging middle school, where Sipe started her teaching career, will receive the most attention. The 1947 structure still has its original boiler, a cantankerous beast that malfunctions frequently. In addition, the 70-year-old school has single-pane windows and antiquated wall-mounted air conditioners that are noisy and ineffective. Old plumbing, that requires students to use a foot-pump in the bathrooms, will be upgraded. The Wenaha Group gave the school a grade of 38 out of 100 during an evaluation of

the facility earlier this year. The high school will receive a new cooling tower. The elementary school will get added multi-purpose and learning space areas.

"Construction will begin very quickly," Sipe said. "It will take two years to complete everything, but people will see significant changes within the next year."

Approval of the bond won't raise residents' tax bills. The same tax rate for an existing bond set to expire in 2023 would continue until the year 2035. The rate is an estimated \$3.133 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

It was 1998 since voters last approved a Umatilla school bond.

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HERMISTON

Four sitting councilors leading

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Hermiston voters appeared content Tuesday to stick with their current crop of city councilors.

In a five-way race for four city council seats, incumbents Rod Hardin, Manuel Gutierrez, John Kirwan and Doug Primmer were leading in a bid to hold onto their seats despite a strong challenge from newcomer Mark Gomolski. The race for the fourth council seat was too close to call at presstime Tuesday night.

In the first round of unofficial results released after voting closed at 8 p.m., Gomolski had the lowest tally with 17.91 percent of the vote. Primmer had 22.5 percent, Hardin 22.03 percent, Kirwan 18.5 percent and Gutierrez 18.27 percent.

Primmer said he was grateful that the citizens of Hermiston were happy with the job he was doing and had decided to trust him with another four years.

"I'm just looking forward

to meeting the city's needs and facing all the challenges that come," he said.

Primmer was elected to the council for the first time four years ago, as was Kirwan. Gutierrez was elected at the same time, although he had served a partial term during a past cycle.

Hardin is the longest-serving member of Hermiston's current city council, with 24 years under his belt. He said serving on the council has been a pleasure.

"I'm looking forward to the next four years," he said.

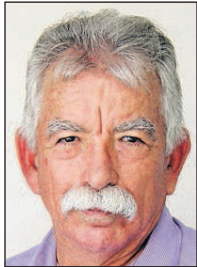
Hardin said he is excited to be able to see several major projects through, including construction of the new senior center, implementation of a free public bus system and completion of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.



Primmer



Kirwan



Gutierrez



Hardin

Gomolski threw his hat into the ring after retiring from a career in Chicago's municipal government and moving to Hermiston more than a year ago. If elected he said he planned to push the city council to be more transparent and increase its communication with citizens.

Parks wins seat on irrigation district board

By **GEORGE PLAGEN**
East Oregonian

One of the landowners involved in a \$2.9 million lawsuit against the Westland Irrigation District in Umatilla County appears to have won a seat on the district's board of directors.

Unofficial results show Cindy Parks, who lives in Echo and ranches in Hermiston, has defeated incumbent Phil Sharkey by a vote of 119-79.

Parks and her husband, Craig, are among the patrons suing the district for allegedly cheating them out of irrigation water. The filings accuse Westland of engaging in a "massive misappropriation" of senior water rights to

benefit several larger farms with junior rights.

In a previous interview, Parks said there are some "trust issues" within the district, and she wants to help mend the relationship between the board and members.

Voting was done Tuesday at the district offices in Echo. Per Oregon law, only district patrons were allowed to vote. For irrigation districts, voting is weighted by land ownership, meaning anyone with up to 40 acres receives one vote; anyone with at least 40 acres, but not more than 160 acres, gets two votes; and anyone with more than



Parks

160 acres gets three votes.

Even though Parks is suing the district, there is nothing that would legally prevent her from running for the board, according to Westland manager Mike Wick.

Terms on the five-member board run for three years. Another new face, Jordan Bennett, will also be taking over for Mike Taylor, who decided not to run for reelection. Bennett is related to Doug and Don Bennett, who are both listed as plaintiffs in the lawsuit, though Jordan is not specifically mentioned in the court filings.

MARIJUANA: Current Pendleton business license rules prohibit businesses from violating federal law

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when Measure 91 passed in 2014, legalizing recreational marijuana consumption and sales.

The Oregon Legislature subsequently passed a law that allowed local governments in counties that voted against Measure 91 to ban marijuana sales with a vote from the city council or county commission, which applied to Umatilla County.

At one time, the Pendleton City Council had the five votes needed to pass a permanent ban, but public pressure and a change of heart from councilor Chuck Wood caused a deadlock that eventually caused the council to refer the issue to voters.

City manager Robb Corbett said he would have to talk with city attorney Nancy Kerns to determine how and when the city



EO file photo

Pendleton residents voted to lift a ban on both medical and recreational marijuana sales on Tuesday. Hermiston and Milton-Freewater voters opted to keep their bans.

would begin allowing marijuana businesses in city limits.

Although the council has already passed zoning codes for marijuana businesses, Corbett said he will ask the city council to look at making changes to its business license rules, which

currently prohibit businesses from violating federal law.

Despite a significant shift in public opinion over the past two years, Corbett said he wasn't shocked by the results after a long career as a city manager.

"I'm never surprised by what the voters do," he said.

TAX: Opponents raised \$26.5M to defeat measure

Continued from 1A

In Eastern Oregon, local educators, businessmen and politicians reacted largely as expected to the defeat of Measure 97. Mark Mulvihill, superintendent of the InterMountain Education Service District, said he was not surprised by the result and admitted the measure had its flaws.

Still, the outcome leaves school districts to fight over limited budget resources during the 2017 Legislature, Mulvihill said.

"Every district is in a different position," he said. "The cloud that hangs over everything is PERS."

Morrow County Commissioner Don Russell, who used to own his own oil company, said Oregon does have pressing issues to work out in Salem, but Measure 97 would not have been a fair system.

"I think the legislature has just not done their job and addressed the issue," Russell said.

As a county commissioner, Russell said Measure 97 could have also halted expansion of big data centers, which have contributed billions of dollars in assets for Morrow County.

State Sen. Bill Hansell, who was reelected Tuesday, said defeating Measure 97 was great news for Oregonians. Lawmakers must now come together, he said, to make some difficult budget decisions and set the state on a sustainable path.

"I think everybody was waiting for what the outcome of the measure would be, first," Hansell said. "It was just ill-conceived and ill-thought of."

State Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, serves as vice co-chair of the legislature's joint committee on ways and means, as well as the House Republican budget chairman. He said the defeat of the measure means the legislature is going to have to tighten its belt and prioritize spending.

Education, Smith said, should be the highest priority moving forward.

"Other programs and services are going to have to deal with less, so we can make sure our children have a little more," Smith said. "We're going to have to take a hard look at the social programs Oregon has created, pare them back and put those dollars where the priorities lie."

Proponents of Measure 97 vowed to lobby lawmakers to make large corporations pay a larger share of Oregon's tax revenue and protect investments in education and health care, which the measure was intended to support.

"We are going to keep fighting," said Ben Unger, campaign manager for Yes on 97.

The campaign was scheduled to release details of its next steps at a news conference Wednesday, Nov. 9. Unger declined to comment Tuesday on whether the public employee union-backed Our Oregon would attempt another ballot measure in 2018.

Measure 97 failed Tuesday 58 percent to 41 percent. The measure would have levied a 2.5 percent tax on certain corporations' Oregon sales exceeding \$25

million per year. A coalition of businesses raised a record-breaking \$26.5 million to thwart the measure. Proponents raised about \$17.7 million. The ballot measure was the most expensive in the state's history.

"Voters didn't buy claims that the \$6 billion tax, based on business sales instead of profits, would not increase consumer costs," Tweed said. "And they understood that the money raised could have been used any way legislators wanted to spend it."

The opposition's blast of advertising on television, radio and social media drove home projections by the nonpartisan Legislative Revenue Office that consumers ultimately would pay for much of the measure in the form of higher prices. The office estimated that the typical family would pay about \$600 more per year under Measure 97.

Unger said Tuesday his only regret during the campaign was that Yes on 97 failed to raise as much money as the opposition.

He said he believed his campaign's message resonated with voters.

"We didn't win this election this time, but we did win the debate," Unger said. "Because of the work we did, no one is going to accept a proposed school cut or more expensive health care before asking instead of cuts, why not make corporations pay their fair share?"

Reporter George Plaven contributed to this story. Contact him at 541-966-0825 or gplaven@eastoregonian.com.

SHERIFF: 'I wish Terry well over the next four years'

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agreeing on a payment structure. And a view emerged of Rowan as not aware of significant events and disconnected from the day-to-day operations in the sheriff's office.

Lehnert, a Pendleton police corporal, built on

that theme and a couple of weeks ago tried to use county records to show Rowan did not routinely log into the sheriff's computer system to view law enforcement activity, which some local police administrators do daily.

Rowan, though, survived the darts. He said voters saw

he was true to his word.

Lehnert said he got into the race to effect a change in the sheriff's office, regardless of the outcome.

"If it forces Terry to step up and do his job, then, hey, mission accomplished," said Lehnert. "I wish Terry well over the next four years and will pray for him."

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