

CANDIDATES: Chavez praised the technical education program

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(student population: 100), to a superintendent position at Brewster School District (1,000), before moving to the Wahlke School District, a Central Washington school district of 2,450 students that he's led as superintendent since 2010.

Brewster was in a tough spot when he got there, Chavez said, requiring him to pilot the district through the aftermath of a lost discrimination lawsuit and the budget fallout from the 2008 recession.

When he moved to Wahlke, he said the district was among the bottom 50 schools in the state.

The district was able to improve, Chavez said, by doing a significant reconfiguration of the school system.

Chavez said he's now looking for a new challenge in a larger district.

He praised Pendleton's career technical education program and its drone classes, adding that Amazon was making investments in unmanned aerial vehicles in package delivery.

"To me that's super cool and cutting edge," he said, and Pendleton needed to make sure it advertised that fact.

Chavez has a bachelor's degree in social science from Eastern Washington University and a master's in administration from Heritage University in Toppenish, Washington.

• **Chris Fritsch**, the assistant superintendent at Longview Public Schools has covered nearly every management role a district can offer.

He told the audience that he has experience in human resources, transportation, facilities, business and operations.

"The point of my career is that I've had an opportunity

to wear a lot of hats," he said.

Fritsch said he's looking to end his career as a superintendent and was looking for a district with strong community support in a rural area.

"Pendleton checked those really important boxes for us," he said about him and his wife.

Like Pendleton, Fritsch said Longview went through a period of declining enrollment.

The district addressed this issue by expanding their online options and creating a distinctly separate alternative high school.

Fritsch said he was proud of contributing to the creation of the alt school, which he said grew from "a four-person operation" to a school with an administrator, counselor and six teachers.

Fritsch is the only finalist currently serving in a school district larger than Pendleton's — the 6,500-student Longview Public Schools system in southwestern Washington.

He was a social studies teacher for 15 years, serving stints as a football and wrestling coach before he became a Longview administrator.

Six years as a high school principal and three years as the executive director of leadership and learning preceded his hiring as assistant superintendent, a job he has had since 2011.

Fritsch holds a bachelor's degree in social sciences and legal study from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington and a master's degree in school administration from Portland State University.

• **J.T. Stroder** has crisscrossed the country to gain his administrative experience.

Stroder spent five years as the superintendent/principal of the 250-student Camas County School District in

Idaho and three years as the superintendent of the 1,100-student Ingram Independent School District in Texas. Since 2012, he's been the superintendent of Gardiner Public Schools, a 250-student school district in Montana just north of Yellowstone National Park.

Stroder started his career by teaching at-risk youth, and he soon graduated to leading at-risk districts.

He said two districts faced steep budget cuts when he entered, and the Camas County School District was in the bottom third in the state in terms of performance.

While he was able to help turn around the districts financially and academically, he was in a completely different situation when he moved from Ingram to Gardiner to be closer to his father in Wyoming.

Stroder said Gardiner is consistently one of the top performing schools in Montana, despite not having much of an administrative team to work with.

"Nobody works harder than small school superintendents," he said.

Stroder said he's not eager to get out of Gardiner, so he can be picky with the districts he's applying to.

Stroder's children are National Junior Olympic athletes and thinks Oregon would be a place that would offer more opportunities for them.

He has a bachelor's degree in earth science and a master's degree in education from Baylor University in Waco, Texas and an education specialist's degree in education leadership at the University of Idaho. He is also enrolled in a doctorate program in education leadership at Montana State University.

• Up until now, **Jim Wagner's** life and career has been based in Minnesota.

The superintendent of Kimball Area Schools in the central part of that state, Wagner said he sought an opportunity outside the area because he said Minnesota had very little middle ground between "mega-districts" and the smaller, rural school systems.

With his four school-age kids involved in a number of activities, Wagner said he was looking for a district that wasn't too big but had more opportunities.

"(Pendleton) looked like a spot that would work for us," he said.

Wagner had nine years as a science teacher and five years in various leadership positions before taking a high school principal position for a school district in Albert Lea, Minnesota.

He left the 3,200-student school district to take the helm at Kimball three years ago.

When he started at Kimball, the district was in debt, had declining enrollment and a bad reputation.

"My district was viewed by outside districts as the armpit of central Minnesota," he said.

Under his direction, Kimball began an aggressive advertising campaign that included mailers to outlying areas and a billboard promoting the district and the community.

Kimball Area Schools eventually grew from 654 students to 800 students, larger than it was before enrollment started to decline and is now out of debt.

He holds a master's degree in education curriculum from St. Scholastica College in Minnesota and superintendent's certification from St. Mary's College of Minnesota.

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SHOOTING: 'He decided to solve that personal issue with gunfire'

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woman when she got a call from an unknown number. The call was from Lemus, whom Rodriguez told to stop calling and the two got in a verbal altercation.

Later that day Rodriguez said he saw Lemus in another car at an intersection and felt he was taunting him. He followed Lemus to Funland at Butte Park, where the two parked next to each other.

Rodriguez said he thought Lemus had a gun and was rolling the window of his vehicle down.

"I panicked, and thought he'd shoot, so I ducked," Rodriguez said. He had a handgun on the floor of his vehicle. "So I loaded my gun and I shot a round. I didn't see where I shot."

It was later discovered that Lemus did not have a gun in his possession at the time of the incident.

Rodriguez said he left the scene and went to his home in Umatilla, where he put the gun in a crawlspace in his house.

"I was in panic mode, I was shocked," he said. "I saw the hole, and shoved the gun into the hole (under the house)."

Hermiston and Umatilla police officers later obtained a search warrant and retrieved the handgun from Rodriguez's home. They also recovered a stolen shotgun from a Umatilla County Sheriff's Office case.

Rodriguez said he and Lemus have a history of conflict. He said the two had a falling out and have not spoken for several years, but that a few years ago, the two got into a dispute over another woman. Rodriguez said Lemus showed up at his house and assaulted him,

hitting him over the head with a bottle.

"He split my head," Rodriguez said.

But prosecutor Jaclyn Jenkins said Rodriguez had failed to bring up that incident during his initial interview with a police detective.

"Relationships are hard," she said. "This case is not. What happened is simple. The defendant wanted to get back with his girlfriend. She was talking to another guy. So he shot that guy. It's that simple. There was no self-defense. He decided to solve that personal issue with gunfire."

Defense attorney Thomas Gray told jurors that Lemus had demonstrated aggressiveness, both by seeking out a confrontation with Rodriguez and by following him after he was shot.

"If you look at the totality, Mr. Lemus was instrumental in what happened here," he said.

Jenkins said Rodriguez's actions were not the result of a split-second decision to defend himself.

"This was a series of bad decisions made by the defendant," she said. "You don't pull the handgun off the floor of the car if you're just going to meet someone. He knows the individual didn't carry guns. He testified that they'd had problems before, but didn't tell (the detective). This is a series of decisions. It wasn't a surprise. The defendant did exactly what he set out to do."

Rodriguez admitted that he had made a mistake, and that he shouldn't have followed Lemus to the park.

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BMCC: Student enrollment numbers are down

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"Those revenue projections will be the foundation on which the budget is based," said Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens. "The budget process goes into overdrive at that point."

Legislators are trying to stop a speeding train — an annual growth of the state budget of around 15 percent.

"It's not sustainable," Hansell said.

Hope exists as the revenue committee looks to carve out "a revenue package with legs" or "finding efficiencies in one department that can be passed along to another," he said.

The final reveal will likely come in June and certainly before July 10, the last day the Legislature can constitutionally meet.

The recent BMCC discussion about whether to hike tuition brought much anxiety, said Casey White-Zollman, vice president of public relations.

"It was a very difficult decision for the board and for the entire college," White-Zollman said. "This was a decision that was not made lightly."

The board got support

for the increase from an unexpected quarter — the Associated Student Government. ASG President Kristine Bivins presented a letter of support at the April board of education meeting, lamenting BMCC's possible \$2.5 million shortfall and offering understanding.

"ASG understands that to be able to function as an organization, BMCC will need to increase tuition for our students," the letter said. "Although this is not desirable to anyone, we all have to come to a mutual agreement that it is the best option under the circumstance."

"This wasn't the ASG deciding on their own," White-Zollman said. "They were out there talking with other students. As a whole, the student body supported this, understanding the position the college is in with increases that are out of our control."

A factor that complicates matters is the decline in student numbers as the economy improves and people go back to work. BMCC enrollment is down from its 2010 peak of 10,823 (for both credit and non-credit students). Last year's headcount was 8,243.

Full-time equivalent students dropped from roughly 3,000 to 2,000 in the past five years.

"As the economy gets better, we dip," Preus said. "We're in a dip now."

That, of course, means revenue from student tuition is dropping as well.

Colleges get income for their general funds from three sources: the state appropriation, income taxes and tuition/fees. Though BMCC passed a \$23 million bond two years ago, that money only funds capital construction and infrastructure projects outlined to voters.

Preus said the college will go forward one carefully thought-out step at a time — all contingent on what the Legislature decides. The school will analyze enrollment in each program and critically eye travel expenses. If a position is vacated by attrition, the need for the position will be evaluated.

"We made the choice not to hurry into reductions or layoffs," she said. "We want to take a thoughtful, evidence-based approach."

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CARTY: More than 100 signed petition against the project

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"We're looking at everything that's out there," Schmidt said. "We're trying to find opportunities that are cost-effective."

During a recent conference call with senior executives, CEO Jim Piro said he hopes to negotiate power purchase agreements within the next few months. Carty expansions, meanwhile, remain on the table as a potential backstop.

A number of organizations, including the Sierra Club and Columbia Riverkeeper, have pushed back on the proposal to expand at Carty. More than 100 people also signed a local petition against the project, spearheaded by tribal activists on the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Located in the shadow of the Boardman Coal Plant on Tower Road, the Carty Generating Station uses gas-powered turbines to generate 440 megawatts.

PGE has applied with the Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council to build two new units at the site: one that could add up to 530 megawatts, and another at 330 megawatts.

The goal is to balance the energy grid with so-called "flexible capacity resources" that can be ramped up and down quickly, working in concert with wind and solar farms when the wind isn't blowing or the sun isn't shining.

PGE's Integrated Resource Plan also calls for another 175 average megawatts of renewable energy to keep pace with the state mandate.

Schmidt said the IRP is the result of 18 months of stakeholder meetings. Nine parties filed comments on the plan after it was filed, in which they encouraged PGE to acquire capacity in the marketplace from existing resources, in particular hydro power.

PGE responded to the

comments on March 31, agreeing that it makes sense to consider those options, "particularly while market prices are historically low." The utility's own research shows that volumes between 100-400 megawatts may be available from multiple potential sellers, for contracts that could run between five and 15 years.

Amy Hojnowski, senior campaign representative for the Sierra Club, said the move by PGE "clearly demonstrates that the utility is feeling the pressure from their customers not to commit to 40 years of fossil fuel infrastructure Oregon doesn't need."

Hojnowski said the group will continue to monitor the situation. PGE hopes to have its resource plan acknowledged by the Public Utility Commission by the end of August.

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