

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Three kinds of candidates in Hermiston

At the risk of oversimplifying, the candidates for Hermiston City Council fall into three categories: the incumbents, the optimists and the critics.

These characteristics alone neither qualify nor disqualify any of the candidates for a seat. A good city council has a balance of experience, positivity and opposition, and if any of those tendencies are missing a city can go off course.

We're of the mindset that Hermiston is on a good course, and our recommendations for council reflect that thinking.

Hermiston voters, regardless of ward, can vote in each race, and have the opportunity to shape half the council on May 15.

Ward 1

The most crowded race features incumbent Lori Davis, critic Mark Gomolski and optimist Jackie Linton.

Davis is seeking a third term on the council and is willing to be along for the ride another four years. She has some grand ideas — a recreational facility, for instance — but we haven't seen her drive any of the discussions or developments so far and we question her ability to lead the charge on such a task.

Gomolski is running for a second time, and has established some credibility through a write-in election to an open seat on the Hermiston School District board. He's plugged himself in all over town since moving here out of the blue in 2014, and has also hammered on a laundry list of complaints about the city's operation, specifically its handling of EOTEC, the conference center and the Harkenrider Center.



Jackie Linton



Roy Barron



Jackie Myers



Doug Smith

We're still skeptical of Gomolski's motives for running for the seat, and think it would be best for him to focus his energy on the school board to prove he's not just another voice of discontent, but someone who can provide a path forward.

Jackie Linton is our pick for the seat. She became engaged in city government through a park being named after her grandfather about two years ago and has been working hard to learn the ins and outs since. She goes to meetings, is unafraid to ask questions and expresses a deep love for this city and hope for its future.

While still learning, we have no doubt Linton will serve with energy and enthusiasm.

Ward 2

Clara Beas Fitzgerald has stepped aside after a term, leaving a wide-open race between her husband, Shean Fitzgerald, and newcomer Roy Barron.

Barron is the kind of millennial that gives us hope. He's an American-born son of immigrants who moved to Hermiston to help the family, which includes Barron's five younger siblings. He majored in political science at Xavier University and is working as a mental health counselor at Hermiston High School after a stint as a victim's

advocate for the District Attorney's office.

We can be wary of youth and inexperience, but are excited by the opportunity to watch Barron start a path of public service here in Hermiston. He's already involved in the Hispanic Advisory Committee and we're confident he'll be a quick study on the council.

Hermiston has an ever-growing population of young Hispanic families, and Barron is the best suited to connect them to city government.

Fitzgerald has a longer history in the city, having moved here in 1978, but his goals for the city don't look much different than what's already on tap — recruiting businesses and growing the tax base. We agree with his goal of relieving the property tax burden on residents, but haven't heard the answers from him or others on how the city council should do that, aside from growing the tax base. We don't believe Fitzgerald will bring any additional expertise or ability in that area.

Ward 3

Jackie Myers has seen plenty in her 24 years on the council. She offers a stout defense of the city's decisions, whether popular or not, and highlights the best developments she

has witnessed. She believes the city has made the right decisions on EOTEC ownership, relations with the Chamber of Commerce and the Harkenrider Center, and praises them to a fault.

Her opponent, Kyran Miller, is the opposite. In Hermiston less than two years, he sees nothing but mistakes and problems in the city government. He thinks Hermiston isn't living up to its potential, but his issues range from the school district graduation rate to the lack of big events at EOTEC (which he thinks the city has mishandled anyway).

Miller's shotgun approach to criticism and lack of long-range knowledge of the city is not a compelling combination. He, like Gomolski, has become involved in clubs and organizations. We'd like to see him continue to grow his range of influences to better understand the complexity of what Hermiston citizens want and need.

We suggest re-electing Myers, and suggest she be willing to address mistakes she has seen over the years so we don't have to repeat them.

Ward 4

Doug Smith, flying solo as an incumbent, has proven his worth in his first term.

He's a mix of team player and free thinker, relishing the broad planning the council has done to set a course for the city but is willing to stand up as a lone voice. In one instance he opposed an onerous landscaping ordinance that was gliding for a rubber stamp, and he takes pride in his willingness to speak out when something strikes him as strange.

We're glad to see Smith turn his knowledge of this town into service to it.

YOUR VIEWS

Editor's note: Many of these letters have been heavily edited for space. They appear in their entirety at www.eastoregonian.com. We will stop printing election letters on Saturday, so for an opportunity to have your letter published before the deadline, please drop it off at 211 S.E. Byers in Pendleton, or 333 E. Main Street in Hermiston, or email it to editor@eastoregonian.com by 5 p.m. Thursday.

Rob Collins for circuit court judge

Since leaving the United States Senate, I have intentionally kept a low political profile, avoiding electioneering and allowing candidates for public office to run unfettered by any comment by me. However, on occasion, someone so exceptional puts his or her name forward that I feel impelled to express my support. Such a one is Rob Collins, a nonpartisan candidate for a judicial position on the Umatilla-Morrow County Circuit Court.

I have known Rob Collins for four decades and have used his legal services throughout those years, on personal and business matters. In all that time, I have found him intelligent, informed, fair and wise. Since the days of Solomon, wisdom has been the essential quality of a judge. Rob Collins is possessed of wisdom. More, justice and mercy are core inclinations in his character. I am pleased to have the privilege of voting for such a man to be a judge.

Gordon H. Smith
Washington, D.C./Pendleton

I am proud to support Rob Collins for Circuit Court judge. I have known Rob for more than 30 years and know him to be a person of high moral character. He is a gentleman in every sense of the word — bright, dedicated, compassionate, honest and trustworthy.

We are fortunate to have such a high quality candidate for Circuit Court judge as Rob Collins.

Kelly Brown
Pendleton

Rob Collins brings a myriad of experience to the citizens. He has been practicing law since 1981, practicing both civil/family and criminal law. He has a deep understanding of courtroom proceedings, having served as pro-tem judge for many years.

He understands the importance of community. He serves on many community boards, including The Round-Up Board of Directors and the Oregon East Symphony.

Rob Collins was raised in the community of northeast Oregon. He understands our

values and what makes us great. Rob Collins will work to protect that.

Kim Cutsforth
Heppner

I do not know Rob Collins as a lawyer, but I have heard him speak about his priorities in his work. It surprised me to hear that, in most family law matters, he preferred to avoid going to court. By that he meant he liked to meet with the opposing party and their lawyer to negotiate a win-win solution. Going to trial meant failing to do that. Rob will carry that perspective into his work on the bench, holding offenders accountable for their actions while seeking sanctions that benefit both offenders and the community. In other words, pay your debt to society and emerge prepared to become a productive, taxpaying citizen.

Bright Farley
Pendleton

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to watch Rob Collins handle a fairly complex legal case involving a nonprofit organization. The case had some significant challenges, including complex issues having to do with questions of local governance, compliance with Oregon law, and the establishment of a new board of directors.

The case required patience, skill, determination, and a keen understanding of what was right and fair. It took time, but thanks to Rob's perseverance, commitment, and knowledge of the law the case was resolved successfully and the organization still serves people in our community today.

Scott Palmer
Pendleton

I find it alarming that a candidate is running solely on how many times he/she has been to court. Again, it would seem to me that if an attorney is thorough, fair, objective and truly cares for the clients, they would work hard to alleviate the immense financial burden of court costs and attorney fees and settle out of court. I'm voting for fair and balanced. I'm voting for Rob Collins.

C.K. Dimon
Pendleton

Mike Breiling for circuit court judge

I have been working in this circuit for the last 14 years. I spend day in and day out in the courtrooms. I can not overstate the importance of having a judge that really understands the type of litigation that occurs in those courtrooms.

I have seen judges come and I've seen

judges go. Without a doubt, the most important trait to both me and my clients is in-depth understanding of the legal issues before the judge. It's even more important in Courtroom 2, the courtroom in which the newly elected judge will most likely be placed. That is the courtroom that hears juvenile matters. Juveniles are not allowed jury trials — a judge and solely a judge determines what happens to those children.

I practiced law with Mike. He knows the intricacies of juvenile dependency and criminal law. It's not easy to learn. It's not intuitive. When people's futures are at stake, isn't it important to make sure the person deciding their outcome already knows the rules?

Kara Davis
Pendleton

Michael Breiling has the skill, knowledge, and competency to serve this judicial district well. He is an accomplished trial attorney that is well acquainted with the rules of evidence and the day to day responsibilities that come with being a Circuit Court judge.

As a prosecutor I had more than a few trials with Michael Breiling. He was always prepared, zealous, and demonstrated a ready legal knowledge that was in depth and precise.

As a civil practitioner, I have found Michael Breiling to be earnest, fair, and responsible. As a Circuit Court judge, Michael Breiling will seek not only the correct legal outcome of a case, but also one centered on justice and fair play. One cannot ask more from a judge.

Dean F. Gushwa
Pendleton

Umatilla and Morrow County residents should vote for Michael Breiling for Circuit Court judge because he is experienced, trustworthy, hardworking, and fair.

Mr. Breiling has been in practice for 20 years and has a wide range of legal experience from complex criminal and civil cases to property and contract issues.

He has built his legal practice on the virtues of working hard for his clients, belief in absolute confidentiality, respect for others, clear respect for the laws that govern Umatilla and Morrow counties, and the highest integrity.

Tina Mallars
Umatilla

George Murdock for county commissioner

Having observed the interaction between the county commissioners and sheriff's department for the last few decades, I am

encouraged by the leadership of George Murdock and his dedication to public safety. George has been instrumental in creating an atmosphere of harmony and cooperation between the sheriff's office and the board of commissioners. Sheriff Rowan and the board have worked to double the number of road deputies and expand the jail capacity by 100 inmates.

Scott and Bonnie Sager
Pilot Rock

I recently retired from the sheriff's department after almost 45 years of service. During those years I worked with 17 county commissioners. I saw them almost daily, and observed how they interacted with all the employees of the various departments as well as the public.

In my opinion, Commissioner Murdock is one of the best. He truly cares about the people he works with, and the public he has contact with.

L. Marie Gard
Pendleton

Commissioner Murdock has a rare and wonderful combination of knowledge, dedication, care, and humor. He is a change agent that stays with a project or initiative from conception to implementation. He goes beyond "thinking outside the box" and into "breakthrough" thinking.

George Murdock has my vote for county commissioner of Umatilla County.

Carol Speed
Athena

John Shafer for county commissioner

John Shafer (or as I call him, dad) would be a great county commissioner if elected. I could tell you about all of his many accomplishments and achievements, but instead I want to tell you more about him.

I admire how hard he works at anything he sets his mind to. It always amazes me to see my dad come home from work and go straight to a city council meeting. If elected I know that my dad would strive every day to make sure that the citizens of Umatilla County are fairly represented.

Unfortunately, I am a few months shy of reaching 18 years old so I am ineligible to vote in the upcoming election, but I encourage all who can to vote for John Shafer.

Matthew Shafer
Athena

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.