

Wheeler County commissioner faces recall election

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

A rock crusher, garbage truck, and the road department are among the things spurring an Aug. 28 recall election of Wheeler County Commissioner Robert Ordway.

Fossil resident Ava Terri Hunt filed a petition to recall Ordway with the Wheeler County Clerk's Office on July 10. In her statement justifying the recall, Hunt accused Ordway of professional mismanagement.

Her complaints included selling a rock crusher for less than its value, buying a garbage truck with no title,

not participating in various committees, and abstaining from voting on "critical matters" before the Wheeler County Court, including a \$2 million grant for a fiber optic project.

Hunt had until Oct. 8 to collect 123 signatures from Wheeler County voters, but she returned to the clerk's office two weeks later with 151 valid signatures.

With the recall initiated, Ordway had the option of resigning his seat. Instead, he decided to keep his position and sent a letter of justification.

"Vague, misleading assertions on the petition are inconsistent with facts

and demonstrate a disregard for the truth," he wrote in a letter received by the clerk's office on Monday.

Ordway argued that the court collectively decided on how to sell the rock crusher, the garbage truck's title is held by the Wheeler County Sheriff's Office, his duties as road department head took priority over committee meetings in Prineville or The Dalles, and his concerns about the fiber optic project weren't addressed to his satisfaction.

"I have met challenges head-on, and worked to put the tax payers first," he wrote at the end.

Wheeler County voters

will now decide whether to let Ordway finish his term through 2020 or remove him from office during a special Aug. 28 recall election. County Clerk Alicia Hankins said she didn't know how much the election would cost, but a previous recall election cost \$2,500. While the county will have to cover the election's costs, Hankins said she usually budgets for an extra election every year just in case.

If Ordway is recalled, Hankins said the court would have 30 days from the time the election is certified to choose his replacement. Because it's a parti-

san position, the Wheeler County Republican precinct committee will submit three to five Republican candidates for the court to consider for appointment, although the court can consider additional people if the committee cannot deliver at least three names.

The upcoming recall election continues a trend of political upheaval in Oregon's least populated county.

Wheeler County voters recalled former County Judge Patrick Perry in 2016 following accusations that included being a part of a romantic relationship with an employee he supervised.

Under Wheeler County's form of government, the county judge oversees juvenile and probate court while chairing the three-person board of commissioners.

More recently, Wheeler County Sheriff Chris Humphreys announced in June that he intended to resign and was giving the court four to six months to find a replacement.

Along with Humphreys, the office's three full-time deputies and one part-time employee will also exit the law enforcement agency.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

PENDLETON

Dancer finds his rhythm

Remington Christensen excels in competitions

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

To the electronic beat of "Pressure" by Until The Ribbon Breaks, Remington Christensen moved fluidly through leaps, flips, pirouettes and no-hand cartwheels.

He made it look ridiculously easy.

The judges noticed, giving the Pendleton teen a score of 91 for his jazz dance routine, missing the top spot by 0.6 points. The performance came during last weekend's Tremaine Dance Convention and Competition in Las Vegas, an event that draws some of the nation's most talented dancers.

Along with the second place honor, he won a scholarship to next year's competition.

Christensen, 16, dances for Pendleton High School's Rhythmic Mode and the Esprit National Dance Team. His coach is Debbie Kishpaugh, owner of Junior Jam Dance.

Christensen started learning his routine, a mixture of jazz and contemporary moves, a year ago. He took the routine to two other competitions (Onstage New York and the Spotlight Dance Cup) and scored highest in his category in both of them.

Last year, Remington and his sister Terika took first in their division with a routine designed to honor



Contributed photo

Remington Christensen, of Pendleton, dances July 27 at the Tremaine Dance Convention and Competition in Las Vegas.

their grandfather, Lawrence Wolfgram, who died of cancer in 2015.

Remington's mother, Wendy Christensen, called her son a natural who only in the last couple of years started testing his limits.

"Debbie (Kishpaugh) used to get really mad at him," Wendy said. "She could see his potential, but he'd just go dance. In the past two years, he's invested a lot more time and energy into dance. It really matters to him."

Remington said he trains about five hours each week focusing on choreography and technique. He called

dance a way to push himself, but also a haven.

"It's a getaway for me if I'm having a rough day," he said. "I know I can go dance and let all my emotions go."

This summer, he won a spot at the Backhausdance, a four-day intensive dancing experience at Chapman University. In vying to become part of the contemporary dance company, he included a video of himself dancing ballet and another of the jazz/contemporary solo. He and his fellow dancers started out each day with Pilates to strengthen their cores and then spent the days learning choreography,

dancing and performing.

At Tremaine, winning the scholarship might have been his most impressive feat. The 200-or-so competitors first danced a ballet routine together. Fifty of the dancers moved on to learn a jazz/combination routine. Thirty were dismissed. Judges watched the final 20 all weekend and awarded scholarships to four. This is the third time Remington has won.

The PHS junior hopes to dance in college.

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0810.

Boardman man faces charges for May shooting

HERMISTON — Alex Luis Ahumada of Boardman pleaded not guilty Wednesday to assault and other charges stemming from the shooting of a man in May in Hermiston.

Ahumada, 33, was in Umatilla County Circuit Court, Hermiston, to face charges of first-degree assault, two counts of unlawful use of a weapon and one count of felon in possession of a firearm. The state alleged Ahumada on May 19 shot and injured Carlos Antonio Ramirez, 27, of Hermiston.

Police captured Ahumada on May 23 after he barricaded himself inside a Boardman home. He has been in the county jail since.

The grand jury handed up the charges July 26 after hearing from police and other witnesses, including Ramirez, according to the indictment.

Circuit Judge Dan Hill set Ahumada's bail at \$500,000. The next hearing in the case is Aug. 13.

Court records also show Ramirez has two cases pending in Umatilla County for second-degree theft. The state alleges Ramirez stole merchandise worth \$100 or more from the Hermiston Walmart on June 23, July 7 and July 10.

Umatilla County bans all open burning

PENDLETON — Umatilla County is banning all open burning, including agricultural burning, until further notice.

County commissioners voted 3-0 for the ban at their regular meeting Wednesday morning in Pendleton. The ban goes into effect Wednesday at noon.

Gina Miller, liaison to the county's smoke manager committee, told the county board that fire season is stretching the resources of local agencies.

Several big fires have burned in the county, and the Lake Wallula Fire that started Sunday along U.S. Highway 730 near Juniper Canyon. The last report Tuesday indicated the

fire burned almost 12,500 acres and was 96 percent contained.

Miller also said this is the second time in the past 12 years the county has banned all open burning. However, she added, grass seed farmers can seek an exemption.

Safely dispose of meds in Heppner

HEPPNER — South Morrow County residents now have a place to safely dispose of unused medications.

The Morrow County Sheriff's Office announced that it has set up a collection unit at its Heppner office at 325 Willow View Drive. The box will allow residents to anonymously deposit unused prescription medications, prescription ointments and liquids, over-the-counter medications, vitamins and pet medications.

The new collection box is a partnership between the sheriff's office and Morrow County Health District. The box aims to reduce illegal sales of drugs, accidental consumption by children and animals, and improper disposal of the drugs, such as flushing them down the toilet or sink.

Certain items cannot be dropped off at the box, such as illegal drugs, hydrogen peroxide, inhalers, thermometers, needles, hazardous items, aerosol cans or non-prescription ointments, lotions or liquids.

Morrow County sheriffs save man from burning boat

IRRIGON — The Morrow County Sheriff's Office rescued a man from a burning boat on the Columbia River.

John A. Bowles, county undersheriff and emergency manager, in a written statement said multiple 911 callers Tuesday at 5:26 p.m. reported flames erupting from a boat one mile east of the Irrigon Marina.

Morrow County personnel found fire fully engulfing the craft. Sheriff Ken Matlack and marine deputy Mike Cahill responded with Irrigon ambulance personnel onboard to treat the boat operator, Raymond Howey Jr., who had burns on his legs but otherwise was OK.



Photo courtesy of Morrow County Sheriff's Office

A fire destroyed a boat Tuesday in the Columbia River near Irrigon.

The Umatilla Fire Department used a boat with a water pump to extinguish the fire. Howey refused additional treatment. The county is storing the burned-out boat in Irrigon.

Bowles called the response a "great example of agencies working together to protect the public."

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