

'If we can find a way to recharge the basalt aquifer that's more of a long-term fix'

— Rich Pullen, Umatilla County commissioner challenger

COMMISSIONER: Ballots will be mailed out Oct. 17, must be returned by Nov. 6

Continued from 1A

Taxation Department into the digital age, a move he claimed doubled employee efficiency.

As he took credit for the technological progress, he never mentioned the name of the department, nor the involvement of the county's computer and internet technology personnel. He also skipped the fact the change is ongoing. Assessment and Taxation staff is using digital and paper this year. The department also did not get key software for the transition until February, a couple of months after Pullen quit his job.

Economic development and housing came up a few times. Murdock said the county helps communities in several ways, such as the recent economic development grants to Stanfield or providing technology services to Ukiah. The county also is contributing about \$2 million to help Hermiston with the major housing development on the town's north end,

Pullen said the county should be "shepherding" communities — working with and providing them resources and support they might lack. He said the board of commissioners made a mistake in recent



Left: Umatilla County commissioner challenger Rich Pullen, left, gestures while raising a question to the audience as commissioner George Murdock looks on Wednesday at BMCC in Hermiston.



Staff photos by E.J. Harris

Right: Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock, right, addresses the moderator while talking about his role in instigating the county charter review committee during the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce candidate forum as challenger Rick Pullen looks on Wednesday at BMCC in Hermiston.

years by taking on economic development itself, only to realize the need to hire someone for the job.

When the position became vacant about four years ago, Commissioner Bill Elfering and then-planning director Tamra Mabbott split much of the economic development role, which led to the creation of a grant process for projects with tangible benefits, such as job creation. Mabbott left last year, and the county board in February brought on a new economic development and tourism coordinator.

Pullen also stressed the link between water and

economic growth, saying Hermiston's construction of a 1-million-gallon water tank isn't enough.

"If we can find a way to recharge the basalt aquifer that's more of a long-term fix than building a water tank," Pullen said.

They also differed on what the state should do to help the county address mental health needs.

Murdock said he is part of the group that meets each week to find a way to fund a \$1.1 million expansion at the county jail to accommodate offenders with mental health problems. He said the group has identified possible matching funds for the project.

ect. He reiterated the notion that the state should create a mental health program akin to the Community Justice Reinvestment Act, which allocates funds to the local level to help keep offenders out of prison.

Pullen said getting state money would be an uphill battle. Oregon State Police is building its new crime lab in town, he said, and the state may not want to put more money into to another law enforcement project in the county. He advocated for a mental health crisis center that could distribute medication, but he said that would be expensive.

They found the most

common ground on a question about what changes they would like to see to the county charter. The county formed a committee this year to review the charter, and it will present findings in 2019. Pullen said holding primary and general election would suffice.

Murdock said as commissioner he should not comment on the committee's work, but would support its recommendations. However, he questioned why a commissioner candidate who wins outright in the May primary — as

John Shafer did this year — should have to wait seven months to take office.

Murdock said the county is complex, and he can implement in his second term all he learned in his first. He also said he can provide stability to the board with Shafer replacing Commissioner Larry Givens in January and Commissioner Bill Elfering not seeking another term in two years. Of note, Givens has a write-in campaign to keep his job.

Pullen said his decade as a county manager gives him the experience to handle the job from day one, while the public has been paying for Murdock's four years of training.

Murdock ignored the dart and said he has been responsible for the management of the county on a daily basis. His predecessor was Bill Hansell of Athena, now state senator, who held the position for 32 years. Murdock, 76, said he does not intend to stay that long, but he would like a second term.

At one point he claimed to have served as chair of the county board for three years, but Givens held that role in 2017.

Ballots for the election will be mailed out Oct. 17 and must be returned by Nov. 6.

COUNCIL: Both candidates were asked the same set of questions at BMCC

Continued from 1A

"It is exciting to see these goals become a reality," she said.

Gomolski, however, said he has been knocking on doors to campaign and no one seems to know who Davis is despite her two terms on the council. He said the public needs leadership from its councilors, "not just someone who shows up to meetings."

He also accused the city council, including Davis, of already having their minds made up before meetings, and of making decisions "in executive sessions behind closed doors."

According to state law, councils can meet in a private executive session to discuss certain sensitive matters, such as litigation filed against them, but "No executive session may be held for the purpose of tak-

ing any final action or making any final decision."

Mayor David Drotzmann told the *East Oregonian* he was disappointed to hear Gomolski's accusations and that he "absolutely disagrees" that the council is illegally making decisions outside of open meetings. He said if someone only shows up to a meeting once every six months then it might seem like a vote was "fore-ordained," but big decisions have usually been discussed in depth at prior meetings and work sessions open to the public before the night they come up for a vote.

Both candidates were asked the same set of questions on Wednesday at the Blue Mountain Community College campus in Hermiston, ranging from what the city's biggest challenge is to what the city's role



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Challenger Mark Gomolski, left, listens as Hermiston City Councilor Lori Davis speaks during the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce candidate forum on Wednesday at BMCC in Hermiston.

should be in hosting events.

Davis answered most questions by listing past projects the city has completed to improve livability, including the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, the downtown festival street and new trails around town. She said the

city is working on a management plan for EOTEC now and will be looking next week at the results of a public survey about the venue. She said she would like to see the old Carnegie library on Gladys Avenue turned into a museum, and supports the city's

goal of coming up with the funding to build and manage a recreation center with indoor pool.

She also touted the city's financial stability and praised staff for working hard and "watching the bottom dollar."

"Hermiston is in a good financial position and will remain that way," she said. Gomolski criticized some of the projects Davis listed, stating that the city should have had a plan in place for EOTEC a long time ago. He said the festival street was a "showboat" and the \$1.5 million could have been better spent on updates to Main Street.

He said the city needs to do more to reach out to groups such as the Hispanic community and the disabled, and to repair its relationship with the chamber of commerce.

Hermiston's biggest

challenge, he said, was a lack of workforce in fields like electrical and plumbing work, which slows down development of housing and other projects. Gomolski is currently a member of the Hermiston School Board, and said the city needed to do what it could to encourage more students to go into the trades and to help the school district build new schools or expand them.

"I would like to see the schools better helped with bond issues," he said.

He has lived in Hermiston for the past five years, and said he loves the city and believes he will provide leadership beyond showing up at meetings to vote on what the city manager wants.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

a place to **Belong**
PENDLETON FIRST SUNDAYS
Morning Celebration - 10am
Morning Kids Place - 10am
Evening - 6pm
Adult - Study
Youth - Small Group
Kids - Rangers & Girl's Ministries
THURSDAYS
Celebrate Recovery - 6pm
Celebration Place - Kids - 6pm
The Landing - Teens - 6pm
WEEKLY
Groups For All Ages
AN ASSEMBLY OF GOD CHURCH
1911 SE Court Ave.
541.276.6417 • pendletonfirst.com

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church LCMC
Sunday worship at 10:00 AM
Pastor Michael Smith
420 Locust St. • Boardman, OR
541-481-6132

Peace Lutheran Church
210 NW 9th, Pendleton ELCA
Join us Sundays
10:00 am Sunday Worship
10:45 am Fellowship
Adult forum only to 11 am
~Come and be at Peace~
on 1290 KUMA noon each Sunday

WORSHIP COMMUNITY
CALVARY CHAPEL OF PENDLETON
1909 SW Athens Ave., Pendleton
Come join us for Worship at 10:45am on Sunday
541-966-8912

Seventh-Day Adventist Church
Saturday Services
Pendleton
1401 SW Goodwin Place
276-0882
Sabbath School 9:20 am
Worship Service 10:45 am
To share your worship times call 541-278-2678

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
-Presbyterian Church (USA)-
201 SW Dorion Ave. Pendleton
Service of Worship - 10:00 am
Children's Sunday School - 10:20 am
Fellowship - 11:00 am
www.pendletonpresbyterian.com
Open Hearted... Open Minded

Grace Baptist Church
555 SW 11th, Hermiston 567-9497
Nursery provided for all services
Sunday School - 9:30 AM
Worship - 10:45 AM 6:00 pm
Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM
"Proclaiming God's word, growing in God's grace"

St. Johns Episcopal Church
Join Us
On Our Journey With Jesus.
Scripture, Tradition and Reason Family service 9am Sunday
N.E. Gladys Ave & 7th, Hermiston
PH: 567-6672
We are an all inclusive Church who welcomes all.

Community Presbyterian Church
14 Martin Drive, Umatilla, OR
922-3250
Worship: 10 AM
Sunday School at 11:30

The Salvation Army
Center for Worship & Service
Sunday Worship Service
9:30 - Sunday School
10:30 - Worship Service
Wednesday Bible Study
5:30 Family Fellowship Meal • 6:00 Bible Study
COME AS YOU ARE
150 SE Emigrant (541) 276-3369

First United Methodist Church Pendleton
352 SE 2nd Street, Pendleton OR
Sunday Worship 9am • 541-276-2616
Worship Broadcast on KUMA 1290 @ 11am
Worship Livestream at www.facebook.com/FUMCPendleton/
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors
Rev. Dr. Jim Pierce, pastor

Living Word Christian Center
401 Northgate, Pendleton
Celebration of Worship
Sundays 10:00 am
Youth: 0-6th grade
Midweek Service
Wednesdays 6:00 pm
Youth: 0-6th grade Jr./Sr. High
Pastor Sharon Miller
541-278-8082
www.livingwordcc.com

PENDLETON LIGHTHOUSE CHURCH
Sunday Service: 10am & 6pm
Tuesday Kingdom Seekers: 7pm
Wednesday Bible Study: 7pm
We offer: Sunday School • Sign Language Interpreters • Nursery • Transportation • & more!
Pastor Dan Satterwhite
541.377.4252
417 NW 21st St. • Pendleton, OR 97801
www.facebook.com/PendletonLighthouseChurch

Redeemer Episcopal Church
241 SE Second St. Pendleton (541)276-3809
www.pendletonepiscopal.org
Sunday Holy Communion 9:00 a.m.
Wednesday Holy Communion Noon
Weekly Adults Spiritual Life Group
All Are Welcome

GRACE AND MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA
OPEN HEARTS - OPEN DOOR
www.graceandmercy.lutheran.org
Sunday Worship 8:45 a.m.
Sunday School 10:00 a.m. (Nursery Provided)
Fellowship, Refreshments & Sunday School
Check Out our Facebook Page or Website for More Information
541-289-4535
Tom Inch, Pastor
Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church, ELCA (First United Methodist Church)
191 E. Gladys Ave. / P.O. Box 1108 Hermiston, Oregon 97838

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
in Mission for Christ LCMC
Sunday Worship.....9:00 AM
Bible Study.....10:00 AM
Red Lion Hotel (Oregon Trail Room)
www.faithpendleton.org

BAHA'I FAITH IN PENDLETON
"See ye no strangers, rather see all men as friends, for love and unity come hard when ye fix your gaze on otherness."
— Abdu'l Baha
Please come visit with us at **The Baha'i Center:**
1015 SE Court Place
Everyone invited!
Sunday Devotions @ 11:00am
Sunday "Pure Prayer" (no talk, just prayer) @ 6:30pm
Wednesday "Discover the Baha'i Faith" @ 6:30pm,
Thursday Seminars on World Religions @ 7pm
(541) 276-9360 or visit us at
www.pendletonbahais.com
www.facebook.com/pendletonoregonbahais/

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Disciples of Christ)
215 N Main • Pendleton, OR 97801
Behind These Stone Walls Beat the Hearts of Some of the Warmest Most Sincere, Most Caring People in Pendleton.
We Invite You to Come Get Acquainted!
Sunday School: 9:30am
Worship: 10:40am
Office 541-276-5358 M-Thr, 8:30-12:30
www.fcpendleton.org

Come meet Jesus at PENDLETON BAPTIST CHURCH
3202 SW Nye Ave Pendleton, OR
541-276-7590
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 AM
Sunday Bible Classes 9:45 AM
Sunday Youth Group 6:00 PM
Mon. Community Women's Study 9:30 AM & 6 PM
Awana Kids Club (K-6th grade)
Wed Men's Study 6 PM
MOPS meeting the 1st Thur of the Month 6 PM