

Local measures aim to seize on strong economy

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — While state-wide attention is focused on controversial ballot measures, many Oregon voters face local decisions on issues that go above and beyond core public services.

A total of 104 city and county measures are on ballots across the state Nov. 6.

They range from whether the Astoria School District should raise \$70 million for school improvements to whether to allow chickens and rabbits inside Lafayette city limits.

Many local measures on the ballot this year reflect the state's humming economy, according to Jim Moore, a political scientist and director of the Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation at Pacific University.

"The ballot measures that are out there now tend to be, 'Economic life is fine for most of us, let's try to make it better with these ballot measures,'" Moore said. He added, "It's also a good time to take your three-year levies to the voters for school districts and things like that. Economic anxiety is low in a relatively good economy, whereas these things are really hard to pass if there's a recession and people are worried about their jobs."

For example, in booming Portland, voters will consider imposing a 1 percent surcharge on large companies to fund renewable and



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

A few participants chat at the end of the April 21, 2018 Second Amendment rally at Til Taylor Park in Pendleton. Voters in Umatilla, Baker, Douglas, Klamath, Lincoln, Linn, Lake and Columbia counties will consider measures that would prevent each county from using local resources to enforce state or federal laws that would infringe on gun rights granted by the Second Amendment.

efficient energy projects and jobs.

But in a roundabout way, some measures continue to mirror deeper economic challenges in rural Oregon.

While a county museum might to some seem like a fluffy cause to pay for with bond money, supporters of this year's Klamath County "heritage district" bond, which supports the county museum, have sought to fund the museum that way because the county can't.

The county slashed its budget for the museum in 2010. Voters responded by

keeping the museum afloat with bonds approved in 2011 and 2014. They need to be renewed again.

Richard Touslee, interim president of the Klamath County Historical Society, said he expects the bond — 5 cents on every \$1,000 of assessed property value — will pass again.

"The cost is not exactly overburdening, in addition to any cost taxpayers have to pay for any variety of things," Touslee said. "It is an addition, but a very small addition, and we think from what the public gets, we

think they get great value."

In the border city of Ontario, voters are considering whether to lift a 2015 ban on cannabis retailers. It's one of 25 cannabis-related measures on the ballot in cities and counties.

Supporters of the cannabis measure in Ontario are making an economic argument: they say tax revenues could be a boon for the city, which went through significant budget cuts this year.

"Whether it passes or not, there's going to be cannabis in Ontario," said Dave Eyler, a chief petitioner for the

measure. "You might as well make some money off it."

Not all of the cannabis measures are lifting local bans on pot, which Oregon voted to legalize in 2014. In Turner, for example, voters will consider banning new cannabis businesses, while in Culver, voters are being asked whether to prohibit marijuana businesses altogether.

Voters in Umatilla, Baker, Douglas, Klamath, Lincoln, Linn, Lake and Columbia counties will consider measures that would prevent each county from using local resources to enforce state or federal laws that would infringe on gun rights granted by the Second Amendment.

The Wheeler, Coos, Curry and Wallowa county commissions already have directly implemented such laws.

Meanwhile, measures in Union and Jackson counties would expand the definition of a firearm to include accessories and ammunition, and would ban enforcement of laws restricting possession of firearms, accessories and ammunition that are deemed "unconstitutional" by a county sheriff.

The spate of measures to protect Second Amendment privileges is in part a reaction to efforts elsewhere in the state to restrict gun ownership.

Petitioners tried and failed to get two gun safety measures on the state ballot

this year. One would have restricted the sale of certain types of semiautomatic firearms in Oregon, and the other would have restricted the transfer of firearms and how they're stored and secured.

Kenneth Wisdom, a log yard operations manager who lives in La Grande, is the chief petitioner of the Union County measure and said that those petitions, as well as other state laws, prompted his local gun measure.

Wisdom said state law that prohibits state employees from carrying weapons in the workplace — unless carrying a weapon is a part of that employee's assigned duties — as a catalyst for the measure.

"There's just been so many gun restrictive laws that is wrong, that you never know what's coming next," Wisdom said. "And so we've all decided that it was time to just secure our counties at this point and move on."

Moore said those efforts can be compared to a spate of local measures in the early 1990s to ban public money from being spent to "promote, encourage or facilitate homosexuality."

"It's not really going to change anything, it's more to express an opinion," Moore said.

"It's not like the Second Amendment is going to be interpreted differently because one county voted one way and another county voted another way."

BOARDMAN

Lost Valley to close despite new operator

Oregon Department of Agriculture managers say they have lost trust in owner Greg te Velde

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
EO Media Group

Oregon farm regulators plan to shut down a controversial dairy even if the new operator manages to bring the facility into compliance with wastewater regulations.

Lost Valley Farm of Boardman was recently put under new management after its owner, Greg te Velde, lost control over the facility's operations in bankruptcy proceedings and the reins were handed to a federal trustee.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture nonetheless expects to proceed with its revocation of the dairy's "confined animal feeding operation" permit even if the trustee, accountant Randy Sugarman, cleans up the facility's act, said Wym Matthews, manager of the agency's CAFO program.

"Our unwavering aim is to revoke this permit. Whoever's name is on it, we're going to revoke it," Matthews said at a Thursday meeting of the CAFO advisory committee in Salem.

Lost Valley Farm is chal-



Wym Matthews, center, manager of the Oregon Department of Agriculture's confined animal feeding operation program, speaks at an Oct. 11 meeting of the CAFO advisory committee.
Mateusz Perkowski/
EO Media Group

lenging the revocation of its CAFO permit through an administrative process, and a hearing on the matter is scheduled for Nov. 13.

Even if the dairy is brought into regulatory compliance, its past actions — such as manure lagoon overflows — warrant the revocation, and the ODA has lost all trust in te Velde's management, Matthews said.

If the facility operated properly over the short term, the agency has no confidence that te Velde could keep up the compliance, he said.

The ODA anticipates arguing in bankruptcy court that its revocation of Lost Valley's permit isn't subject to the "automatic stay" that protects the company against adverse creditor actions under the

bankruptcy process, Matthews said.

"Do you allow a facility to continue to violate state and federal laws?" he said.

While the facility does have some design flaws, ODA believes the wastewater problems were fundamentally caused by improper operations, he said.

If the dairy is eventually sold to repay te Velde's creditors, the new owner would have to apply for a new CAFO permit, Matthews said.

During the CAFO advisory committee's meeting, Matthews also discussed a planned legislative proposal to raise the maximum fees for CAFO permits.

The last time such an increase was approved by Ore-

gon lawmakers was in 2010, and the costs of implementing the CAFO program have since risen while fees haven't kept pace, he said.

Currently, 90 percent of the program is paid for with money from the state's general fund, while 10 percent is funded with CAFO fees, he said.

The agency aims to fund at least one full-time position entirely from fees, but it's currently about \$50,000 short, Matthews said.

Fees for CAFO operations regulated under a "general permit" currently range from \$100 to \$300 per year, depending on the number of animals at the facility.

For CAFOs with more complex "individual" permits, the current fee cap is about \$2,400.

Under the ODA's legislative proposal, general permit fees would be raised to a maximum of \$500 to \$3,500, depending on operation size, and up to \$10,000 for individual permits.

The maximum fees would be raised substantially to prevent ODA from having to soon return to the Legislature with a similar request, Matthews said.

However, in the short term, the fees for general permit CAFOs would likely be raised to \$125 to \$840 a year, while the individual permit fee would increase to \$5,000.

BRIEFLY

Bank of EO announces third quarter earnings

Bank of Eastern Oregon's net income and profits are up from 2017.

BEO Bancorp announced this week that its third quarter 2018 consolidated net income was \$1,196,000 or \$1.01 per share. That's a 37 percent increase from \$817,000 or 69 cents per share for the third quarter of 2017.

Year to date earnings were \$2,825,000 — up 19.8 percent. Total assets were down 0.6 percent at \$401.5 million, net loans of \$323.8 million were down 1 percent from the same period in 2017 and deposits were also down 1 percent year over year at \$355.8 million.

Chief operations officer Gary Propherer said in a statement that while the Federal Reserve has continued to increase interest rates it has had a minimal effect on deposits so far, as has the volatility of the stock market.

CEO Jeff Bailey said it was an "interesting" summer with a mixed bag of harvest results and commodity prices.

"We are heading into renewal season with a little more optimism than in the past few years and we have seen good rains across the region this past week," he said.

Free class focuses on building your business

HEPPNER — Current and future business owners are invited to attend "Building Your Business Class I," offered by Eastern Oregon University's Small Business Development Center.

Taught by the center's director, Greg Smith, the free session is Thursday, Oct. 18 at 5:30 p.m. at the Columbia Basin Electric Co-op, 171 W. Linden Way, Heppner. Topics include business development, starting a new business, growing your business and more.

For more information or to register, contact 541-962-1532 or eousbdc@gmail.com.

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