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WINNER OF THE 2019 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50



Staff photo by Kathy Aney, File An AR-15 at the 2018 Pendleton Gun Show at the Pendleton Convention Center featured a "TRUMP MAKE AMERICA GREAT" grip. The AR-15 is a semiautomatic rifle that usually shoots 5.56 mm rounds. It has a detachable magazine so users can put in 5-, 10-, 30-, or even 60- and 100-round magazines.

AR-15 puts aesthetics at heart of gun debate

By JONATHAN LEVINSON
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — The AR-15 has taken center stage in the American gun debate. But at its heart, the AR-15 is a rifle that has been modified to look and feel a certain way.

The emphasis on its appearance, however, has shaped how the country regulates firearms, to the frustration of many gun owners and gun control advocates alike.

The AR-15 is a semiautomatic rifle that usually shoots 5.56 mm rounds. It has a detachable magazine so users can put in 5-, 10-, 30-, or even 60- and 100-round magazines.

The rifle that likely comes to mind is black and has any number of aftermarket attachments. Maybe there's a grip attached under the barrel or a scope that, to some, might look like it's made for a sniper. The rifle is easily customized and that's part of its popularity. But it's also the source of a running joke in the firearms community.

"I get ARs in here that weigh 20 pounds, they have so much shit on them," said Jon Bush, a gunsmith in Vancouver, Washington. "Whatever you want to put on, including your coffee grinder."

Bush is a competitive shooter and said the AR-15 is great for that purpose.

"Any platform you can shoot faster and accurate for competition gives you an edge," Bush said. But, he added, "hunting-wise, an AR is not that great."

He thinks people love their ARs for other reasons. It's an image.

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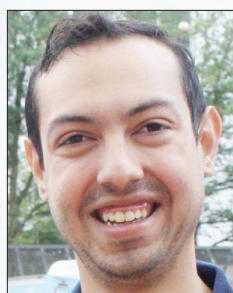
UMATILLA COUNTY

3 now in race for commissioner

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian



Dorran



Lopez



Gomolski

PENDLETON — Three Hermiston men are the early contenders in the primary race for the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners.

Dan Dorran, Mark Gomolski and Jonathan Lopez each look to serve in place of Commissioner Bill Elfering, who is not seeking re-election to the Position 3 seat on the county board.

Dorran is a long-established local figure, having served on the county fair board for 20 years until he stepped down in 2017. He also served on the state County Fair Commission from 2014 to 2018 and on the board of directors for Hermiston's Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center from 2011 to 2017.

He dove back into county business with a stint on the county's Charter Review Committee.

Gomolski, too, served on that committee. He also is in his first term as a member of the Hermiston School Board

STILL TIME TO FILE FOR PRIMARY

Candidates have until March 10, 2020, to join Dan Dorran, Mark Gomolski and Jonathan Lopez in the primary race for Position 3 on the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners.

and has served on Hermiston's Hispanic Advisory Committee since 2016.

Lopez also is on the Hispanic Advisory Committee and is a member of the Latino Business Network.

Gomolski managed Elfering's campaign for commissioner four years ago, and the two remain friends. Gomolski said he wants to take the reins from Elfering.

"I know Bill has a lot of economic development plans in the works, and I would like to make sure those things come to fruition," Gomolski said.

He wasn't able to talk more Tuesday due to an appointment, and Dorran's voicemail indicated he was traveling Tuesday morning.

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Flags fly outside of the Umatilla County Courthouse in Pendleton on Tuesday afternoon.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

School bond refinance could lower tax rates

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — With the construction projects funded by the Pendleton School District bond long since completed, the public is in the midst of paying off the bill.

But Pendleton taxpayers could end up paying less than expected, a development that could impact property tax statements.

At a Pendleton School Board workshop Tuesday morning, Michelle Jones, the district's director of business services, told board members that staff was exploring refinancing the bond, which was originally valued at \$55 million.

Jones said the district and investment bank Piper Jaffray have been engaged in discussions

on taking advantage of low interest rates and refinancing the district's bonded debt.

If the district agreed to it, the school system could see \$3-3.5 million in savings, Jones said.

"It's a great deal," school board chairman Gary George said.

Jones said the district could take multiple approaches to how they might use those savings.

The district could make the cuts across the board, allowing them to reduce the dollar-per-thousand rate from \$2.40 to \$2.11.

Jones said the district could also use a "step" approach, meaning the district could go out for another bond without having to raise the property tax rate.

Regardless of how much the public pays, taxpayers are on the

hook for the foreseeable future: Jones said the bond is set to expire in 2038.

Pendleton voters' large investment in the school system was used to overhaul the district's aging facilities, especially at the elementary school level.

Using proceeds from the bond, the district demolished the old Washington and Sherwood Heights elementary schools, building new, larger schools in their place.

The district heavily renovated the old Hawthorne school, turning it into the Pendleton Early Learning Center, a centralized kindergarten and preschool.

The new schools allowed the district to consolidate Lincoln Primary School, which became

the district's central office, and West Hills Intermediate School, which now houses the Pendleton Technology and Trades Center and Hawthorne Alternative High School.

After the burst of activity in the first few years following the bond, the district began addressing projects further down their priority list, culminating in an auditorium renovation and track replacement at Pendleton High School and the demolition of the old district office in 2017.

The bond refinance is already on the agenda for the board's Oct. 14 meeting. Jones said the board's action would allow district staff to negotiate the refinance, which they would hope to close by the end of the year.

