



EO Media Group file photo

Wallowa County Commissioner Todd Nash, left, was one individual who came to the minds of a lot of people when they heard the news of House Rep. Greg Barreto’s resignation. Nash said he isn’t in the market for another political position. The commissioner mentioned that Barreto, R-Cove, had broached the subject with him in the past.



EO Media Group file photo

Tim Seydel, left, vice president for university advancement at Eastern Oregon University, visits legislative sessions frequently in Salem to advocate for Eastern, but the possibility of returning as the state representative for House District 58 is not on the EOU graduate’s radar.



EO Media Group file photo

Pendleton Mayor John Turner was one of three men mentioned as possible successors to Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, who announced he would not be seeking a fourth term in office. A former Blue Mountain Community College president and a retired Marine, Turner lost the 2014 Republican primary to Barreto. Turner said he doesn’t have as much time to spend in Salem as he did in 2014 and he’s happy in his current role.

Barreto: Union County Republicans caught off guard

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Smith of Heppner, threw out three names who could enter the GOP primary — Pendleton Mayor John Turner, Wallowa County Commissioner Todd Nash, and Tim Seydel, the vice president of university advancement at Eastern Oregon University.

But when interviewed, all three men said they didn’t intend to jump into the race.

A former Blue Mountain Community College president and a retired Marine, Turner lost the 2014 Republican primary to Barreto, the president of Barreto Manufacturing.

Turner said he doesn’t have as much time to spend in Salem as he did in 2014 and he’s happy in his current role.

Elected to the Pendleton City Council in 2016, Turner said he won’t make a decision on running for a second term as mayor until January.

“It is certainly a huge compliment. I have a lot of respect for the (state) senators and representatives who represent Eastern Oregon,” said Seydel, who has worked at Eastern for about 20 years and is an EOU graduate.

Seydel, who visits legislative sessions frequently in Salem to advocate for Eastern, said the possibility of running is not on his radar.

“I’m not even thinking about it. At this point I am not planning on running,” he said.

If he were to consider running, he said he would have to weigh how it would affect the work he does for the college.

“I have a huge passion for making sure EOU is successful,” Seydel said.

The name of Wallowa County Commissioner Todd Nash came to the minds of a lot of people when they heard the news of Barreto’s resignation, but Nash isn’t in the market for another political position. The commissioner mentioned that Barreto had broached the subject with him in the past.

“I’ve had conversations with Greg about it,” he said. “I don’t think it’s going to be a good fit for my wife and I at this time. I’m humbled that he asked me to begin with.”

Nash said the position called for a commitment bigger than he and his wife, Angie, could make at this time. He noted the seven hours of travel between Wal-

lowa County and Salem and the fact that he is a rancher who would have to hire extra help to take care of his cattle.

“I’d like to do it because it would allow me to represent the community that I love, but I just can’t do it at this time,” he said.

The commissioner said he didn’t have anyone particular in mind to fill the seat, and he didn’t rule out running in the future if he still had the fire in his belly.

“If we sell the cows in a few years and draw a little Social Security to supplement that position, then maybe that would make it work,” he said.

The future of 58

The news of Barreto’s decision not to run caught members of the Union County Republicans off guard.

“It was a surprise for us,” said Brian McDowell, vice chair of the group.

The Union County Republicans have no candidates set to run in Barreto’s position. They are now beginning a search, but McDowell does not expect anyone to step forward as a candidate in the near future.

McDowell, however, is

optimistic that candidates will emerge. He explained two people have expressed interest to the Union County GOP about running for Greg Walden’s District 2 congressional seat after he announced forgoing re-election. McDowell said he believes one or both of these two potential candidates could decide to run for Barreto’s position if circumstances change on the congressional race front. The changes could include a number of candidates with high name recognition entering the race.

Suni Danforth, the chair of the Umatilla County Republican Central Committee, said she was sorry to see Barreto go and hoped his successor shared his sense of integrity.

She also said that she hasn’t talked with anyone specifically about running for Barreto’s seat.

Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock said high name recognition is just what a candidate needs, but who already has that kind of standing is an open question.

“It’s really hard to identify a natural successor,” Murdock said. “There isn’t an obvious successor to Barreto.”

While county commissions can be jumping-off points for state office, none of the three Umatilla County commissioners are interested in running for the District 58 seat. Murdock and Commissioner Bill Elfering are winding down their political lives and don’t plan to seek office again when their terms expire. Freshman Commissioner John Shafer also has no interest in serving in the Legislature at this time.

Smith, who was elected to his District 57 seat in 2000, said prospective candidates should spend time in the district’s various communities before making a decision.

Although the deadline to enter the primary isn’t until March 10, Smith said serious candidates would need to announce their campaigns before the end of the calendar year.

Whoever wins the race might be running for a very different district by the time they’re up for re-election.

Following the 2020 U.S. Census, the Legislature will redraw Oregon’s legislative districts, and although Smith said he has no insider knowledge of the upcoming

process, he anticipates the entirety of Umatilla and Morrow counties will be united under one House district.

Although the Republican nominee will still have to win in November, the GOP candidate will be the odds-on favorite to take the seat.

The Pendleton area hasn’t been represented by a Democrat in the Oregon House since former state Rep. Bob Jensen won his first race in 1996. After a brief stint as an independent, Jensen switched over to the GOP in 2000.

“For all practicality, it’s a Republican race,” Smith said.

While Democrats have put forth a candidate as recently as 2014, Murdock was similarly skeptical of their chances.

“There is as much likelihood in my mind for a Democrat getting elected in the district as someone from Eastern Oregon being elected to statewide office,” Murdock said. “It’s just not likely to happen.”

La Grande Observer editor Phil Wright, La Grande Observer reporter Dick Mason and Wallowa County Chieftain reporter Steve Tool contributed to this report.

Recycling: ‘It’s entirely within our power to fix the system’

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ing profits as workers had to separate out the waste that made up as much as 20% of the load the company had paid for.

And so, in July 2017, China announced it would no longer be allowing imports of most plastic waste, and transfer stations suddenly found themselves with nowhere to sell their plastic for recycling.

Some, like Milton-Free-water’s recycling contractor Horizon Project, quickly announced they would stop taking plastic. Others, like transfer stations in The Dalles and Hood River, kept collecting curbside recycling to keep people in the habit but then took out the plastic and sent it to landfills or incinerators.

At Sanitary Disposal, Jewett told the *East Oregonian* in November 2017 that they were still stockpiling plastic

on site, hoping to ride out the sudden glut in the very small domestic market.

Two years later, a new home for most of that plastic has never materialized, domestically or in other countries.

Now, Jewett said, a similar problem is forming with cardboard. He said China was taking 20 million tons of cardboard a few years ago, then five million, and now two. The county expects to not accept any by 2021.

“That market has really gone sour,” Jewett said.

Sanitary Disposal is stockpiling cardboard like it once stockpiled plastic, hoping the market will rebound in the spring after going “as low as it’s ever been.”

Jewett said the transfer station is still recycling other materials, such as wood, metals and glass. Right now it’s costing them more to ship the

glass to Portland than they’re getting paid for it, he said, but “we don’t want to break any habits.”

“Our recycling income is a lot lower than it has been in the past,” he said.

A report on recycling released this week by the environmental advocacy organization Environment Oregon stated that Oregonians are producing more waste than ever while recycling less of it.

“The reality is plastics are so hard to recycle and so low value that we could only consistently afford to collect and recycle it when China was willing to buy it,” Celeste Meiffren-Swango, state director for Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center, said in a statement. “Now we are left to deal with it ourselves, and plastic is choking our recycling system.”

The report points out the problems that come with

reduced recycling. Burning more plastic in incinerators damages air quality and presents health hazards. More plastic ends up in the ocean. Landfills can leak toxins into the soil or water supply, and generate greenhouse gases. And finally, when materials are discarded instead of recycled, it creates a need to obtain new “virgin” materials, accelerating our consumption of the Earth’s resources.

In order to address the problem, Environment Oregon suggests a three-pronged approach: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

Under reduce, they support laws banning or reducing single-use products, such as plastic bags, straws and styrofoam take-out containers. They also support structuring garbage rates based on how much waste a person throws out, encouraging conservation.

Under reuse, they encourage consumers and businesses to trade single-use plastics for products, such as fabric grocery bags or refillable water bottles. They also advocate for “right to repair” laws that allow people and independent shops to fix their own appliances and other products.

Under recycle, they suggest an expansion of curbside recycling and composting programs, as well as laws requiring new products to contain a certain percentage of recycled material. They want to legally hold manufacturers accountable for “the waste their product will become.”

“It’s entirely within our power to fix the system, but what is missing is the necessary sense of urgency,” U.S. PIRG Education Fund Zero Waste Director Alex True-love, who co-authored the report, said in a news release. “Recycling, composting and

waste reduction efforts will need to play an important role in the fight against microplastic pollution, climate change and other environmental challenges.”

From a transfer station’s standpoint, Jewett said individual customers can do their part by being careful to follow rules posted at sites where they get rid of their recycling. The glass drop-offs are only for glass bottles and food containers, for example. If someone throws a window into the dumpster and it breaks, they have now rendered the entire load of glass unfit for recycling, out of concerns about lead contamination.

Contamination by careless recyclers, of course, is what lead to China throwing the recycling market into chaos in the first place.

“Remember: Contamination turns recycling into trash,” Jewett said.

Cancer: Pendleton’s new cancer center announces its first medical director

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Project Development Trip Leasure said one of the keys to ensuring the project’s success was finding the right director.

“We can build the building, we can bring the equipment in,” he said. “But you have to find the right person to work with the patients.”

Choe said 70% of his work will be dedicated to helping treat cancers, while the other 30% will be to helping ease pain and improve the quality of life for patients.

A small portion of Choe’s work will also be treating benign disorders, such as plantar fasciitis.

In addition to bringing radiation oncology services closer to home for those in the region, Choe is hoping to provide new treatment options for prostate cancer and radiation iodine treatments, which he said aren’t

currently offered in the area.

Beyond his radiation oncology work, Choe will also work directly with the Eastern Oregon Cancer Network, a newly formed nonprofit geared toward collecting and distributing funds and providing other assistance to the cancer center’s patients.

As Choe takes over as the center’s first director, it’s the next step in a long professional journey.

Choe first followed in his father’s footsteps and earned a degree in electrical engineering and computer sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. But while working for a company that was working on radiation oncology software, he found a new passion.

“In electrical engineering and computer sciences a lot of what you do is interact with a computer,”



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Dr. Juno Choe poses in front of the yet-to-be-completed Eastern Oregon Cancer Center in Pendleton. Choe was hired by Radiation Business Services, the company behind the project, to serve as the center’s first medical director.

Choe said. “I wanted more human interaction and to be able to see the difference

I was making in people’s lives.”

So in 1996, Choe went

back to school to study medicine at the University of Washington. He stayed

there until 2006 to earn his doctorate and complete an internship. Since then, Choe has also trained and worked in Cleveland, Ohio, and Yakima, Washington.

For RBS, which was formed in 2010 with the aim of eliminating long distances that people must travel to receive cancer treatments in rural areas, Choe checked all the boxes of who they wanted to lead the new center in Pendleton.

“We wanted somebody very community-minded and patient-centric, and that brings value to the community,” Leasure said.

As he prepares for his new job, Choe’s goal is to build the new center into a “top notch facility” by starting with the patients.

“How can I help you to heal?” he said. “How can I make things easier for you and your family? How can we help you on your cancer journey?”