

# Colleagues: ‘His heart was always in the right place’

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will be greatly missed.”

In an interview Wednesday, Councilor Dale Primmer recalled the banter they would share on city issues outside council chambers.

“His heart was always in the right place,” he said.

Along with Turner and Primmer, Fairley was elected to his first term on the city council in 2016, filing for office just ahead of the deadline.

Fairley made up for his late entry on the campaign trail, quickly turning his North Hill ward into a sea of green and gold campaign signs.

In a three-way race that included a repeat candidate and former city councilor, Fairley won nearly 3 out of every 4 votes by election night.

As a councilor, Primmer said Fairley was laser focused on finding a way to repair and maintain the city’s street system and creating sustainability for city services and infrastructure.

Fairley spearheaded a successful effort to reform the council’s goal-setting process so that goals were more directly tied to the annual budget.

Turner said the council is set to meet soon to use the process for the first time.

A Pendleton High School graduate, Fairley returned to his hometown in 2002 and embarked on a lengthy career in state government.

Phil Hodgen remem-



EO file photo

**Scott Fairley, second from right, is sworn in as an elected city councilor by Judge William Perkinson on Jan. 3, 2017. Fairley was elected to his first term on the city council in 2016. Fairley died Tuesday evening while on vacation in Mexico. He was 53.**

bers when he and Fairley both worked in the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality’s regional communications office out of Pendleton.

Hodgen retired in 2009 and lost contact with Fairley until the pair had a chance encounter in Walla Walla, Washington, about a year ago. Hodgen said it was the first time he had seen him in 10 years, but Fairley’s congeniality made it feel like no time had passed at all.

“It was nice not to be forgotten,” he said.

Fairley would go on to work for the governor’s office in economic development, changing titles as governors came and went.

Annette Liebe directly supervised Fairley from 2014 to 2017 when he worked for the state office of regional solutions, and she couldn’t

remember a time when he didn’t come into work with a smile on his face.

Liebe said this sense of positivity combined with his breadth of knowledge gave him a knack for bringing people together and advocating in Salem for the communities of Eastern Oregon.

Hansell said his work history with Fairley extended all the way back to Hansell’s days on the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners, when Fairley helped the county secure funding for water projects.

“He was the kind of guy I wanted in an economic battle,” Hansell said. “I wanted him in my foxhole.”

He continued to do that in his most recent role as the regional development officer for Business Oregon, where he worked with John Day City Manager Nick Green.

## PAYING TRIBUTE

Readers who knew Scott Fairley or were familiar with his contributions to Eastern Oregon reacted with an outpouring of tributes to him Wednesday morning after news of his passing began to spread. Below are a few of the comments left on the East Oregonian’s Facebook page or sent to the newsroom.

“Shame to hear. I didn’t know him well but when he was campaigning he went door to door by himself getting familiar with those he would represent in our part of the town. Respectful, nice, and appreciated for his short time on the council.”

Jason Lange

“I am so very sorry to hear this. He did so much in his short life to try and make Pendleton a better place to live. My heart goes out to Kimbra, his mom and the rest of his family. He will be missed and remembered.”

Shannon Cimmiyotti Collins

“I am shocked and saddened to hear this. Scott was so active in the community and such an asset. He will certainly be missed. My condolences

to his family.”

Charles E. Denight

“Scott will always be a sunshine. He had the best smile and warmest personality one could be so lucky to know. This is heart wrenching. All our love to his family during this most difficult moment.”

Sara Danzelaud

“I had the pleasure of working with Scott in his many different roles for the State. I had hoped his enthusiasm, energy, and positive attitude would lead him to run for Governor some day. Our thoughts are with his family as they recover from the loss of a great man.”

Dave W. Wildman

“A great man and good Councilor. He will be missed dearly.”

Albert Plute

“That breaks my heart. He was truly one of the good guys, kind to everyone.”

Alice Gilson Hepburn

“Scott was one of the most positive people I know. What an enormous loss to anyone he’s ever passed.”

Stephanie Myers

“Oh, my! What a loss to our community! Really good man and always had a smile and warm greeting. He did so much for this entire region. Rest in peace, my friend, and deepest condolences to his family.”

Dave Tovey

“I cannot express enough my sadness at the loss of Scott. No words can adequately convey the heartbreak or our gratitude for the opportunity to work with him. Scott was a tremendous asset to the citizens of Oregon. His expertise was well-known among the business sector throughout the state. Most importantly, Scott was a devoted family man and tremendous father. We respect the family’s privacy and offer our thoughts and prayers.”

Rep. Greg Smith

“I think we didn’t fully appreciate the number of things that happened in Northeast Oregon that had Scott’s fingerprints on them. He was somebody who, without a lot of fanfare, made a lot of good things happen.”

George Murdock

Green said Fairley played a big part in helping John Day secure \$343,800 in grants and \$1 million in loans for local projects in their three years working together. Just earlier this week, Green said he had shot off some emails to Fairley to request help with some new grant applications.

As Fairley’s friends, family, and colleagues process the void he left behind, the

council will need to take steps to fill his seat.

The Pendleton City Charter requires the council to declare his seat vacant and appoint a new councilor to represent Ward 2, which covers North Hill, Westgate and the airport, until Fairley’s term expires at the end of the year.

It’s been less than a year since the city council made its last appointment, which

was spurred by the January 2018 death of Councilor John Brenne.

In an email announcing Fairley’s death to his coworkers at Business Oregon, Cummings echoed the rest of Fairley’s former colleagues by lauding his best qualities before offering a solemn sign-off.

“I will miss him, Oregon will miss him,” he wrote. “I miss him already.”

# Deputy: Walking the school safety beat, deputy brings help to M-F

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allocated funding.

Sharing Parsons’ salary and other expenses with the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office means both organizations benefit, Duff added.

“It’s a great example of public agencies working together,” he said. “Sheriff Rowan has someone available in the summer, or he can pull Darrin out if he needs him.”

When the district asked the community to pass a bond in 2016, parents and others were adamant that student safety be high priority, despite the raise in property taxes a “yes” vote meant, Duff recalled.

The school district pays roughly three-quarters of Parsons’ annual salary, with the sheriff’s office paying for the time outside the school year calendar, when the deputy works patrol and other duties, said Undersheriff Jim Littlefield.

Parsons is the only SRO working out of the Pendleton-based office, Littlefield said.

With just a couple of months at his new post, Parsons is still busy learning the lay of the land, he said.

Although his office is at



Walla Walla Union-Bulletin Photo/Greg Lehman

**Darrin Parsons chats with students at McLoughlin High School between classes recently. While Parsons spends much of his time at Mac-Hi, he also does safety work at the district’s other schools.**

McLoughlin High School, there’s work to be done at the district’s other facilities.

“I’m here for school safety at all the schools. Today I am headed to Gib (Gib Olinger Elementary School) to talk to a little guy with ‘sticky fingers,’” Parsons said.

He also does some patrolling in school zones,

especially at Ferndale Elementary, set in the countryside outside city limits.

But it’s at the high school where Parsons needs to spend the bulk of his time.

Like any high school, Mac-Hi sees its share of bullying, fights, harassment and vaping issues, the deputy said.

“I haven’t seen drug and

alcohol use. Yet,” Parsons said.

Parsons works closely with the building’s attendance and safety officer, Arnie Alvarez. Together, the men patrol hallways during student transition times, greeting kids and keeping an eye on notorious hot spots.

At other times, they split to increase rule enforcement.

“I lap the campus and cruise the parking lot. I check the doors — sometimes the kids will prop those open,” Parsons said.

The area around and including the boys’ restroom on the main floor of the school is one of those, Parsons and Alvarez agree.

“For some reason, this is where they come between classes and just hang,” Parsons said with a shrug and smile. “So sometimes we’ll go in and hang with them.”

Having a SRO on-site has been helpful and allows for more eyes on more square footage, Alvarez said, returning from tour of duty in the restroom.

“With Darrin, I feel like I have a lot of backup and support,” he said.

Vice Principal Mario Uribe said having Parsons in the school is beginning to show results.

“At the beginning of the school year, we had 60-plus freshman and sophomores with tardies and detention. Now it’s about 20, meaning we’ve cut the problem in half,” Uribe said.

As well, car break-ins in the school parking lot are at zero since Parsons began,

he added.

“It’s definitely a team approach,” he said. “We all help each other out.”

Working together gives the three men an opportunity to steer students into better decisions, they said, such as suggesting a teen walk away from brewing trouble when they come upon such a situation.

For Parsons, walking this beat has opened the door to a change in attitudes about police.

“I want to bring positive interactions with law enforcement. It’s not a traffic stop, it’s not curfew, it’s not a domestic situation. We’re not in a negative situation here,” the deputy pointed out. “We’re here to help them. We want them to trust us.”

Duff agrees, noting he’s witnessed Parsons bringing an aura of cheer wherever he goes.

Small mistakes caught in youth by teachers or a school resource officer can prevent bigger mistakes later, Duff added.

“And it’s nice to know if you make a mistake, the person sitting across from you isn’t going to hate you,” he said. “They want you to succeed.”

# Good cheer: ‘He made everyone feel like they were his best friend’

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said Fairley never stopped moving. In high school, he started snow shoveling and woodcutting businesses and worked on his 1957 Willys Jeep. As a young man, he traveled through Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

Fairley seemed to navigate the world with easy humor and grace that attracted others.

“Scott, more than anyone else I’ve known, had a gelling effect on whatever group he was with,” Joe Deutz said. “The first question everyone asked when invited to any occasion, was whether or not Scott would be there.”

In 1993, he and Pat Temple — Eva’s husband — formed a company called Living Heritage Tours. The pair took groups in a 16-passenger van to various sites around Northeast Oregon. They created an interpretive

center inside the Blakeley Grain Elevator near Adams that highlighted the wheat history of the area. They also did step-on tours, meeting tour buses in places, such as Meacham, and giving local color. The buses stopped at prearranged mile markers and “we would ‘hijack’ the bus,” Pat Temple said.

Temple played a snake oil salesman wearing a bowler and pinstripe suit. Fairley played a cowboy. Sometimes they were joined by a floozie, played by Dee Armstrong.

After the tour company, Fairley got into public affairs work with the Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and later for the Governor’s Office as eastern region coordinator. Most recently, he was regional development officer for Business Oregon.

He worked hard, but managed to fit in daily walks, bike rides and trips to Wallowa Lake, Hells Canyon and vacations across the pond with Cook. He skied and rode his motorcycle. Each morning, he walked his redbone coonhound, Truman.

“I’m not sure who was walking who,” Primmer said. “Sometimes Scott was on his bike and he didn’t even have to pedal.”

Dan Haug often accompanied Fairley on adventures into the great outdoors. In January, he, Fairley and another friend hiked into a spot near where the Innaha and Snake rivers meet. Haug marveled at Fairley’s stamina.

“He could out-walk most people,” Haug said.

They spent one day hiking several miles almost straight up to a ridge overlooking the Snake River

where Scott had earlier scattered his dad’s ashes. He looked at his dad’s photo, kept there in a Ziploc bag, and placed it back under a cairn that he rebuilt each year.

Fairley brought his energy, intellect and good cheer with him into the Pendleton City Council chambers. Mayor John Turner came aboard the same week as Fairley.

“He was always involved in the discussion,” Turner said. “He never sat back quietly. He was a good compass for us. I will miss him.”

Family members describe a sunny, but complex man who advocated for environmental responsibility and public broadcasting. He was a person who could never sit still, said his sister Jennifer Peterson. An encouraging optimist who loved his community.

“His friends and family

are going to miss his happy spirit,” she said.

His mother, Carolyn Frasier, is still trying to wrap her mind around a world without Scott.

“I’m brokenhearted,” she said. “Everyone who knows Scott loves him.”

Cook is still in Mexico, arranging passage home for her husband with the American Consulate. This morning, as she talked by phone, she was operating on about two hours sleep.

Fairley was admitted to the hospital in Playa del Carmen on New Year’s Eve, she said. His doctor broke the news he needed surgery to repair an aneurysm. The couple attempted to call their insurance company to get authorization.

“We could never get emergency authorization,” Cook said. “By Monday, we still didn’t have approval.”

They played endless

games of 4 Kings in the Corner as Fairley tried to ignore his pain, she said. They discussed paying for the surgery themselves and set the wheels in motion. Before the operation, the aneurysm burst.

Cook is devastated. She will miss the guy who made her coffee every morning, the man who bonded immediately with her young son way back at the beginning of their relationship, and his joyful laugh. The one who left crumbs on the kitchen counter and took her on wonderful adventures and spent their anniversary with her at Raphael’s. She will miss the husband who stayed cool when she lost her temper.

“He was the calm to my storm,” Cook said. “He was always my rock who kept me straight.”

Cook’s voice broke. “I don’t know how I’ll do it without him.”