



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Vehicles drive through floodwaters while traversing Highway 395 in Pilot Rock on Wednesday afternoon.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

People help to push a car free of the river so that an excavator could begin work clearing debris that had snagged on a bridge in Pilot Rock on Wednesday.

Floodwaters: 'I just came down to help however I could'

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on families. As the water continued to rise, crews from Hatley Construction brought in heavy equipment and helped to begin clearing trees and other debris that had become snagged on the city's bridges, effectively obstructing the creek.

"I just came down to help however I could," said Bernabe.

Despite efforts to block them, the rising floodwaters inundated the parking lot and gas pumps of the gas station and leaked into the grocery store as crews rushed to sandbag its entrance.

Pilot Rock Mayor Virginia Carnes said flooding is worst where East and West Birch creeks come together near the center of town, swamping businesses and homes. Carnes said the community center is open for evacuees.

"We have a lot of people out sandbagging," she said. "There's a lot of water running."

Recent heavy rains led to flooding in Pilot Rock and landslides that shut down East Birch Creek Road south of Pilot Rock.

National Weather Ser-



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Pilot Rock Fire Protection District crews help to sandbag the entrance to Pilot Rock Family Foods on Wednesday afternoon.

vice hydrologist Marilyn Lohmann said an area about 8 miles south of Pilot Rock received the heaviest rainfall over the past 24-hour period. She estimated the amount to be anywhere

from 3.5-5 inches, judging from observer reports. She said the weather service also received reports of flooding on Pine Creek near Weston.

"There could be minor

flooding in just about every stream across the region with the amount of rain that's fallen," Lohmann said.

McKay Creek is also a concern.

"It increased to around 2,000 cubic feet per second before coming into the reservoir this afternoon," Lohmann said. "It's expected to peak at close to 3,500 cfs tonight and start

to back down."

The city of Pendleton reported that flow releases from McKay Dam would increase by 50 cubic feet per second increments to a release of 1,100 cfs by 7 p.m. Wednesday to accommodate the higher inflow.

Thursday is expected to bring more rain, but it will be lighter, Lohmann said, with anywhere from one-tenth to one-quarter of an inch. Colder air will arrive on Thursday night, with snow falling above 3,000 feet in some locations.

The weather will turn drier and warmer heading into the weekend, with rain returning on Monday.

Flooding in the region has prompted Oregon Department of Transportation to close several highways. U.S. Highway 395 south of Pilot Rock, Oregon Highway 244 between Ukiah and Hilgard, and Oregon Highway 237 between Cove and Union near milepost 19 expected to stay closed through the night. Other areas are experiencing a rapid rise in rivers and streams.

East Oregonian reporter Kathy Aney contributed to this report.

Pendleton: Voters vote no on 4-cent gas tax for road repairs

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the voters of the North Hill district.

Shumake said she was glad the race was contested, adding that one-candidate races were undemocratic, before vowing to stay involved with Pendleton city government.

"I'll be back," she said.

Neither candidate thought they would run when former Councilor Scott Fairley was the incumbent, but his sudden death in early January created an opening for the first-time candidates.

The council appointed former Councilor Chuck Wood to fill Fairley's seat

through the end of the year, and although he's enjoyed his second stint on the council, Wood said Wednesday that he intends to follow through on his promise to step down early to make way for the winner of the Ward 2 race.

Wood said there isn't a definitive date for his resignation, but conversations between himself, Brandsen and Mayor John Turner point to a transition sometime in September. Brandsen's full four-year term will start in January.

In the only other contested race, Ward 3 incumbent Dale Primmer handily turned back a challenge from

retiree Larry Anderson.

Going into the race, Primmer said he felt good about his first term and the support he built from constituents, noting that he received more votes this year than he did in 2016.

Anderson didn't have any harsh words for his opponent, saying Primmer was "one of the good ones" on the council.

Anderson said he entered the race for the south Pendleton ward to raise awareness about the city's spending habits rather than any issue he had with Primmer.

"If I wasn't running, I probably would've voted for him," Anderson said.

Retired U.S. Forest Service administrator Kevin Martin ran unopposed for the open Ward 1 seat, and he'll replace the retiring Becky Marks next year. Turner and at-large Councilor Paul Chalmers both ran unopposed and easily won second terms Tuesday night.

Voters reject tax measures

Pendleton voters were not as kind to the two tax measures on their ballots.

Similar to 2015, residents handily rejected a 4-cent gas tax proposed to fund street repair. Pendleton city officials hadn't placed much optimism in its passage after

the pro-gas tax political action committee pulled its support in late March as the pandemic set in.

That didn't stop the No Pendleton Gas Tax PAC, a group funded by gas station owners and oil distributors, from raising \$11,700 to defeat the tax.

As of Wednesday, nearly two out of three voters cast a ballot against the gas tax.

Despite the setback, Turner has said that the council is still invested in raising more than \$1 million in additional funding for street repair.

The fall of the gas tax wasn't reflective of a regional trend. Milton-Freewater

renewed a public transportation levy, the Echo Fire District passed a \$500,000 bond and Boardman passed a bond of its own for water and wastewater facilities.

One glaring exception was a general operations levy for the Pendleton School District.

After voters approved and renewed the levy several times since 2000, the levy was narrowly defeated on Tuesday.

As the school district prepares for deep cuts in state funding, school officials will have to figure out how to make up for the loss of \$300,000 in revenue the levy generated.

November: Traditional campaigning in virus' wake

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he was excited to receive as significant a portion of the vote as he did despite four other candidates entered in the race.

Though confident entering Tuesday, Beers said she still felt pleasantly surprised by the result and was looking forward to the opportunity to continue her campaign into November.

"I'm very excited about it," she said. "I'm delighted and humbled by all the people who supported me."

Dorran's campaign leading into the primary leaned on his extensive experience in the community serving on a variety of committees and boards, including his nearly 20 years in various roles on the Umatilla County Fair Board. While that record resonated with voters Tuesday night, Dorran felt the campaigning process as a whole was still impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's a shame we weren't able to have conversations in front of and with the public," he said. "I think that would have really had a big impact on how the voting went."

Though it was an unorthodox first campaign due to COVID-19 for Beers, who is a self-proclaimed constitutionalist and leader of the Umatilla County Three Percenters, it also placed a greater emphasis on social media campaigning.

With a strong following built up on her Facebook page, Beers credited her social media presence for some of her success in the primary. But now that she's separated herself and set up a showdown with Dorran in November, Beers plans to dive right into the next stage of her campaign.

"I plan to pursue a very diligent campaign against Mr. Dorran. He's a very formidable opponent," she said. "I was sort of winging it at times during the

primary — there won't be any winging it moving forward."

That "diligent campaigning" begins Monday, when Beers will be meeting with a steering committee she formed of five trusted friends and advisors to outline and organize her next steps.

While no stranger to public service, Dorran is also running his first official campaign and is hopeful more traditional methods will be available to him now that restrictions due to COVID-19 begin to lift locally.

"We're really looking forward to having more opportunities for a traditional campaign moving forward," he said.

Those traditional methods will allow for more face-to-face discussions and opportunities to meet voters, Dorran said, which will be helpful now as the race dwindles down to two and differentiating one's

platform from another becomes more critical.

Beers highlighted that these opportunities to meet with voters will also be an opportunity for her and Dorran to learn from the voters what it is that they'd like to see on their platforms. Throughout her campaign so far, Beers has touted herself as an opportunity for voters to make a change in the type of leader they elect by being a more accurate voice of the people.

"It's not my agenda, it's your agenda," she said.

Both Dorran and Beers voiced some disappointment in the county's overall voter turnout, which was reported at right around 36% of the 45,240 eligible voters. Regardless, the two will have months more of opportunity in a smaller, more concentrated campaign before voters will make their final choice between them in November.

Bentz: 'Cliff is a good man'

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cans to replace Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River, who announced last fall that he would retire after 22 years in Congress. The district is the only one of five in Oregon represented in Congress by a Republican. It covers all of Eastern and Central Oregon, along with a large slice of the southwestern part of the state.

Bentz announced early for the race, with much of the geography of his state senate district overlapping Walden's.

Buehler entered the race, bringing his statewide name recognition and fundraising ability into the contest. The physician served two terms in the state House sandwiched between unsuccessful bids for secretary of state in 2012 and governor in 2018.

Buehler praised Bentz, and said he would support his campaign to win the seat in November.

"Cliff is a good man and

a strong legislator," Buehler said in a statement. "His deep roots in CD2 will serve us all well in Congress."

A late entry that stirred the campaign was Crumpacker, an asset manager, who registered to vote in Deschutes County on Nov. 20, three weeks after Walden announced he would retire, according to Oregon Public Broadcasting.

The district has proved reliably Republican for the past two decades, with Walden sometimes receiving more than 70% of the vote during his reelection campaigns. His closest race came in 2018, when Jamie McLeod-Skinner of Terrebonne held him to 56% of the vote.

Spenser began the race as campaign manager for Democrat Raz Mason of The Dalles, who eventually withdrew her candidacy. Spenser then filed to run for the office herself. Heuertz described himself as an independent businessman.