

OUR VIEW

## School board seats up for grabs

There's no question that during most school board races, many incumbents face no competition for their seats. This year, for whatever reason, that's not the case in Hermiston with six candidates running for four open seats.

Incumbents Bryan Medelez and Karen Sherman are both running unopposed, Medelez for Position No. 2 and Sherman for Position No. 6.

Medelez, an operations manager for a Hermiston trucking company, has served since being appointed in 2019. While Sherman does have an opponent on the ballot, Caitlin Melhorn told the *East Oregonian* that she was dropping out of the race due to the time commitments she already has. Sherman has served on the Board of Education for 20 years and is a retired teacher. Both have done a good job and voters should have no hesitancy in checking their names on the ballot.

### Position 3

A pair of newcomers — Liliana Gomez and Dain Gardner — are vying for the seat currently held by Mark Gomolski.

During an interview with the *East Oregonian* editorial board, Gomez, a Hermiston native and a records specialist for the Hermiston Police Department, said if elected one goal would be to help break down barriers to student success and parent involvement, including linguistic and cultural barriers. Another would be to help the district stay on sound financial footing, something Gomez knows a little bit about in her role on the district's budget committee.

Gardner, an Air Force veteran who says he attended multiple schools "all over," is a senior trooper for the Oregon State Police's Fish and Wildlife Division. He said he decided to run for school board because of his two children in the district, and the difficult experience they have had during the pandemic.

While both bring something to the table, we were impressed with Gomez's answers and her depth of knowledge about the district, and we believe voters should back Gomez.

### Position 4

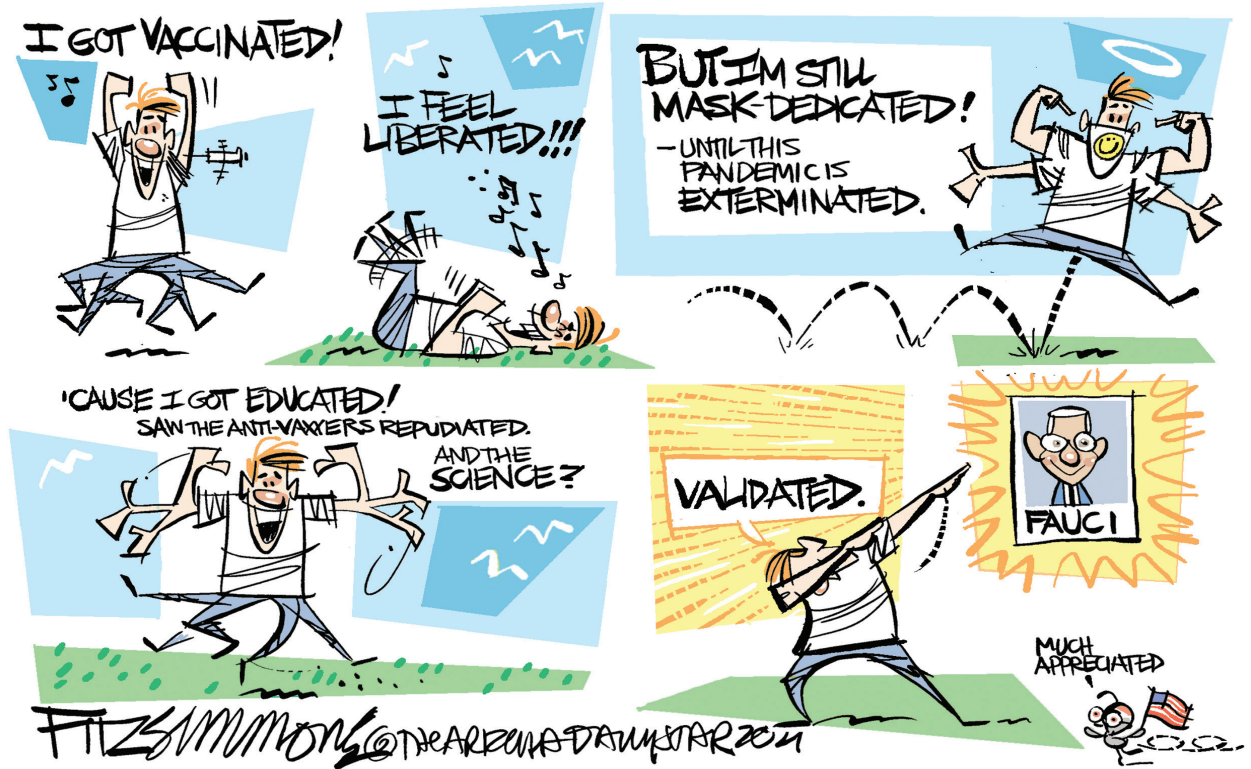
The incumbent Brent Pitney faces a challenge from Hermiston attorney Sally Anderson Hansell.

Pitney, a lifelong Hermiston resident, is running to retain his seat after he was appointed to an open seat on the Board of Education in 2018.

Pitney is vice president of Knerr Construction and has a child in high school. He said he's learned a lot during his service on the board so far and would like to continue that work. He feels his background in construction can be useful to the district as it begins construction on projects funded by the 2019 bond.

Anderson Hansell, a Hermiston attorney, has past experience on the Hermiston School District Bond Oversight Committee in 2008 and other boards. With three children currently in the district, there's no doubt the Hermiston High graduate has a vested interest in the growth and prosperity of the district.

We believe Pitney has done a good job on the board and deserves another term. We agree with him that his background in construction will prove useful for the district as it moves forward on bond projects already underway. However, we also feel Anderson Hansell would make a quality member of the board and should consider another run or applying for a vacant seat should the opportunity arise.



## Inside my shoes goes inside my head



TAMMY MALGESINI  
INSIDE MY SHOES

Whether triggered by a letter, a TV commercial or an encounter with a fast food worker, here's a glimpse into some of the random thoughts that have occupied my mind recently — sometimes for just fleeting moments.

### Nextdoor app

My husband and I recently received a letter from someone in the neighborhood inviting people to use the Nextdoor app. To entice people in joining, it indicated its a place to share community news, help reunite people with their pets, share local business recommendations "and so much more."

It seems the premise behind the app is to create a sort of virtual neighborhood watch/coffee klatch. It might be helpful in regards to knowing if there's been an increase in crime in the neighborhood, if someone spotted Fido or if you need to borrow a ladder. However, John and I quickly determined that the pitfalls far outweigh the potential benefits.

At the bottom of the letter, the organizer indicated there were already more than 800 posts in our neighborhood's Nextdoor. The last thing I need is a micro-Facebook where people feed off their neighbor's complaints about so-and-so's lawn, the dog barking all night long and you need to move your kid's portable basketball hoop because I literally got a tape measure and it's sticking out more than 18 inches in the street.

I envision multiple complaints about people driving too fast in the neighbor-

hood. Then, the random posts about vehicles driving too slowly, followed by, "Did anyone see the white van, they might be casing the neighborhood."

Just like "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," you need to drive just right or you'll end up on the neighborhood Nextdoor.

### Look Ma, no hands

I'm a bit concerned with some of the technology in vehicles. A commercial for the Buick Envision has a woman showing off to her friends while squeezing her big rig into a seemingly small space by using the automatic park assist feature.

Maybe I'm old school but if you can't parallel park, I think you need to practice more, find a bigger space or get a smaller car. My worry is getting sandwiched tightly between a pair of auto-parkers and I don't have the advantage of technology to help me get out. I guess I could always put it in four-wheel drive and rock crawl over their bumper.

### More training?

At times it seems wearing masks has impacted our ability to understand people. However, that wasn't the case during a recent encounter my husband and I experienced in the drive-thru at a local fast food restaurant. When the young person at the window asked if we wanted any sauce, I turned and looked at John. From the passenger side he said, "What are my choices?" The gal couldn't hear him, so I said, "What kind do you have?" Her response, "Any kind."

John and I just looked at each other — insert facepalm emoji. Really, what do you say to that?

It reminded me of some phone calls I fielded while the on-call administrator at area group homes for adults with devel-

opmental disabilities. Some of the issues were beyond a need for additional training — they were more about a need for common sense.

While still asleep early one Sunday morning, I groggily answered the phone. The staff person said the menu called for waffles but she couldn't find the waffle iron. "Make pancakes," I said.

### Vaccine hesitancy

It seems you can bring a vaccine to the people, but you can't make them roll up their sleeves.

When defending former President Donald Trump's actions in response to the novel coronavirus, some supporters point to Operation Warp Speed. They say the initiative, which resulted in the development, manufacturing and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in record time, was an amazing accomplishment.

Indeed it was. With a target of making initial doses available by January 2021, that was surpassed in mid-December 2020 when the first shots were injected into the arms of frontline health care workers.

The ironic thing is many of these same people aren't getting inoculated because they're uncomfortable with getting a vaccine that was developed so quickly.

### Don't tell me what to do

While working on this column, a message popped up on the screen of my laptop:

"Your battery is running low.  
You might want to plug in your PC."  
Or maybe it's just time to shut it down.

*Tammy Malgesini, the former East Oregonian community editor, enjoys spending time with her husband and two German shepherds, as well as entertaining herself with random musings.*

## YOUR VIEWS

### Fire district deserves community support

This letter is to support Measure 30-148, the bond to increase funding for our fire district, Umatilla County Fire District #1. As a proud Hermistonian, I gladly point out a few reasons why our community should approve this bond measure.

- Our firefighters/EMTs risk their lives for our community. It's critical they have suitable equipment and training to keep them safe and effective. Budget shortfalls directly impact their safety. This bond will support those needs.

- Our 24/7 emergency personnel need updated and adequate housing accommodations, especially now that we're represented by outstanding female crew members!

- Our community needs up-to-date and reliable equipment. Our current emergency fleet is aging and rapidly accruing miles as our first responders meet our record call volumes. Current budget shortfalls mean our district leaders must choose vehicle readiness over training and equipment. This bond will ensure our emergency vehicles and emergency crews are ready when our community needs them.

- Our district wrote this bond in a way that asks our community members to serve as a steering committee to oversee the use of our funds. Our fire district leaders have been and will continue to be accountable to our support.

I've toured all of our fire district build-

### LETTERS DEADLINE FOR MAY 18 ELECTIONS

The *East Oregonian* does not run endorsements of more than 400 words. The *East Oregonian* will institute a deadline for letters to the editor, so we can be fair with all the letters we receive and allow for responses before Election Day, if necessary. We run local letters of endorsement on a first-come, first-served basis. Please submit your endorsement letters to the editor by 5 p.m. Friday, May 7. You can email them to editor@eastoregonian.com, or mail them to *East Oregonian*, c/o Andrew Cutler, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, 97801. We will publish our last letters on Saturday, May 15. Any letters received after the deadline will not run. Election Day is May 18.

ings. I've seen the critical needs and cannot adequately describe them in this short letter. I urge you to support Measure 30-148 at the ballot in May; our community depends on UCFD1 daily, and we should be there when our district needs support from us.

Josh Burns  
Hermiston

### City surveys need a new design

Pendleton's city manager, on the behalf of the mayor and city council, is reaching out with a new survey to get a feel for public sentiment on future goals city management should pursue and their priority. If you would like to complete a survey, it appears that first off you'll need to open a Facebook account and proceed to the city's Facebook page. There you'll find the link to access the survey.

The survey consists of a list of goals with instructions to rate their importance. Since it appears the goals have already been selected, they are simply asking for your opinion on importance to you. A suggestion? Skip the suggested goals, go straight to the comments section, and make your own suggestions and their importance.

In the future, perhaps city management should consider redesigning our water bill format — nearly every household gets one — to include a space for surveys on that portion returned with payment to get a real, broad-based public opinion. As it stands now, participation will be extremely limited, yet city officials will no doubt announce overwhelming support for their final decision.

Incidentally, the survey closed on Tuesday, April 20.

Rick Rohde  
Pendleton