

## YOUR VIEWS

### Port of Morrow commissioners deserve extra scrutiny

The upcoming Port of Morrow Commission election has three candidates, Jonathon Tallman, John Kilkenny and Rick Weiss, who have all questioned the integrity of some current commissioners regarding conflict of interest.

The conflict of interest revolves around port commissioners that oversee and ratify the Columbia River Enterprise Zone board that distribute tax funds “to their businesses and to their budgets” (Tallman, April 28, 2021). “There is a some sense of distrust in what the Port is doing. When the commissioners are also business owners the potential for conflicts of interest are always present” (Weiss, April 28, 2021).

John Kilkenny is calling for a special legal council at every port meeting, including executive session meetings, to deal with these problems. This is the quality of leadership John Kilkenny will bring to the port.

Windwave Fiber Optics is owned in part by one Morrow County commissioner, two port board members, and the father of port CEO Ryan Neal, a board member of the Columbia River Enterprise Zone. Windwave Fiber Optics has grown from a startup in 2004 to a \$20 million company because they do all POM optics. According to ORS 279C 335, “A public improvement contract shall be based on competitive bids.” ORS 279C 365 (4) requires bids “available for public inspection.” The port needs to produce evidence of a competitive bid process of honoring ORS law regarding Windwave Fiber Optics and end special deals for Windwave.

Port-contracted businesses receive up to an 85% tax reduction, which is distributed by Columbia River Enterprise Zone board members. This process is open to conflict of interest, lack of transparency, special interests and cronyism where those that play the game get the money. Amazon in Morrow County uses up to a million gallons of water per day, per campus (four buildings) at 35 cents per thousand, and Boardman businesses pay 84 cents per gallon from water paid for with a \$20 million bond financed by the citizens of Boardman. Is there any wonder Amazon intends to double the number of new buildings in Morrow County?

POM has done nothing of consequence for the south end of Morrow County. POM provides jobs but close to three-fourths of the employees live outside of Morrow County and do not contribute to the county tax base.

Make a statement for our heritage, professional integrity and overburdened taxpayers with your vote for Port of Morrow commissioners.

**Stuart Dick  
Irrigon**

### One BMCC board candidate supports another

As a candidate for the Blue Mountain Community College Board of Trustees, I participated in a candidate forum sponsored by the BMCC Faculty Association. Carrie Sampson-Samuels is also a candidate and likewise participated.

I listened to her responses to various questions and have rarely been so impressed at the grasp of the issues and ability to articulate personal perspectives and positions as in her presentation. I hope my strong endorsement will not negatively impact her candidacy.

The college will be well served by her unique skills, talents, abilities and perspectives.

**Kim B. Puzey  
Hermiston**

### Let’s find common ground instead of walking away

As a proud Oregonian, I feel the need to respond to the recent column by Mike McCarter (Why voting to join Idaho is the right choice for Eastern Oregon, Thursday, April 29). Thank you for laying out the reasons that inspire such a radical proposal.

The problem this change is to solve, it seems, is that we East-siders don’t have enough say in state government. We are too scattered to have any more influence than a fence line of thistles has on the wind.

The proposed solution is to pick up our skirts and walk out the door. But it’s not just enough to walk through the door, this plan would have us haul most of the house along with us. If we are going to live among like-minded folks and have controlling say in what goes on, this is one way to do it.

Let me offer my response. Moving to a more compatible state is good for now. But in my lifetime Oregon has been under leadership of Republican senators and governors, including control of both Senate and House. In this same span, Idaho has had several Democratic governors and national leaders, as well as a majority in the Legislature.

We might move the state lines only to have the voters (in either state) decide to change parties. Do we then petition to join a compatible Nevada? Or gerrymander counties across Idaho so we can connect with Montana?

Most states are fixated on taxes. Would we bring Idaho enough new revenue to pay for our upkeep? The quoted comparisons between the two states on tax and school and employment make clear that Idaho is doing better than Oregon. Would the state accept two-thirds of Oregon, dragging down their successes?

### 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. on 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, OR 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.

“It’s our culture,” you say, and urban Western Oregon has a different take on most things because their situation demands a different response. We all try to meet the need. It can be a clash of cultures or a feeding of new ideas from culture to culture. Truth is, our national culture for generations was based on agriculture, but is now based on the city, on urban life.

I guess I could get used to reading the *Southwestern Idahoan* instead of the *East Oregonian*, and walking among the open carriers of sidearms. I know I don’t want my grandkids learning to hate those who don’t agree with them on everything. I would like them to argue and discuss and debate all the issues of the time without turning tail and walking away.

We are in a common state of drought. We have common challenges. We have been finding mutual solutions since 1859. Let’s pray for rain.

**Don Reese  
Echo**

### School board must reflect the community it serves

Briana Spencer will be an outstanding Pendleton School Board member. She knows how to bring people together and get things done, while elevating any conversation with civility and respect.

She is a dedicated, productive, solution-oriented leader with the community’s best interests at heart. Early on there was some confusion about her simultaneously serving on the board of Nixyaawii Community School, but that has been resolved. If elected, Spencer will serve on the Pendleton School Board with the unanimous, enthusiastic support of Nixyaawii, CTUIR Tribal leaders and elders. She brings a broad-based understanding of community issues and will provide valuable representation at the highest level of our school district.

Patrick Gregg is a solid candidate. At this time, however, we need a school board which more closely reflects the community it serves. Please join me in voting for Briana Spencer for Pendleton School Board, Position 7.

**Mary Hallman  
Pendleton**

### Retain Pitney for his expertise

It is great to see so much interest in our Hermiston School Board. In the 12 years that I have served on the board, I have never seen so many candidates run to serve the students and families of the Hermiston School District.

Even though each candidate brings their own strengths and qualifications, I believe Brent Pitney has earned another term. He has a strong background in construction at a time when our school district is heavily involved in building new schools, and his expertise is highly valuable.

It would be unfortunate to lose his experience and training as our district moves towards normalcy again.

**Ginny Holthus  
Hermiston School District Board of  
Directors**

### Spencer values diversity

In this era of lifting up youth voices, recognizing the value of diversity and building full community representation into our institutions I feel that Briana Spencer fits the bill, and the time. She embodies all of those characteristics, and brings a fresh, youthful, yet wise and experienced perspective that is needed in this multi-generational scholastic organization.

She has proven her dedication to community service through service on the Nixyaawii school board, in regional efforts for social justice, public education and more. Briana has a clear voice and vision for the betterment and support of all.

Give this generation its place in decision making for the future: Vote for Briana.

**Karen Wagner  
Pendleton**

### Gardner will be a voice for students

Over the past four years I always spoke up as a school board member on matters the public held. I thank you for the chance to serve. It has been an honor. I support Dain Gardner for the school board. I could not think of a better person to take my place.

His independent ideas on reopening our schools and keeping them open impressed me. He will be an advocate for the people. Dain attends board meetings, so he knows the issues. He ran for the budget committee just weeks ago. He has shown me that he will be a voice of the community for the betterment of our children’s education.

I support Dain Gardner for the school board and I hope you will give him your vote.

**Mark F. Gomolski  
Hermiston**

### Gregg is professional and knowledgeable

I am excited to see a great guy like Patrick Gregg running for Position 7 on the Pendle-

ton School Board. I got to know Pat professionally before knowing he was a family man. We’ve work together on Real Estate transactions and I’ve always appreciated his expertise, level head and professionalism.

In several conversations that I have had with Pat, he has demonstrated not only his knowledge of the law, but also his insight and ability to interpret the law to those who may not have experience or full understanding. He’s kind and patient in dealings with my office and our mutual clients. I’ve always appreciated that about him.

It was later at a community event when I met Pat’s wife, Jill, and their three boys. I don’t know them intimately, but it’s obvious by just being in their presence that they’re a great family. I admire them as parents — involved, loving, real, all things that I feel are key in navigating parenthood and life in general.

It is without reservation that I endorse and fully support Patrick’s bid for Position 7 on the Pendleton School Board.

**Genna Banica  
Pendleton**

### Sherman is dedicated to Hermiston schools

I am pleased to see Karen Sherman is again running for the Hermiston School Board.

I first met Karen when she came to teach at the junior high in 1970. I quickly realized she was an effective teacher with a lot of empathy for the kids. When she retired in 2001, I asked her what she was going to do. She responded, “I am not giving up on the kids because I am planning to run for the school board.” She was elected in 2001 and has served continuously since then, many times as board chairman.

There have been few board members who have been as dedicated to this district as Karen has been. We need her experience at this time to lead us through the state COVID-19 mandates placed on the schools. We also need her experience in directing the schools through the construction of two new elementary schools. She has been there and done that.

**Carlisle Harrison  
Hermiston**

### Spencer’s skills make her the best choice

I urge voters living in the Pendleton School District to join me in voting for Briana Spencer for Position 7 on the Pendleton School Board.

I have lived in Pendleton for almost 21 years. In that time, I am unable to recall any school board candidate who possessed the unique combination of accomplishments and experience that she would bring to the board. The endorsements by numerous others, including our former police chief, Stuart Roberts, speak to her ability to work productively with people who have differing perspectives to obtain tangible results that benefit us all.

People often give lip service to “working collaboratively,” but in my experience, few have the skills to actually accomplish it. Briana Spencer has these skills.

These skills will be especially useful to our board, given the heightened tension of the present time. She also has served on the Nixya’awii Community School Board, the Washington State Indian Board of Directors and the CTUIR Education and Training Committee. This experience would also be asset to our board. If elected, she will hit the ground running.

I do not endorse Briana Spencer lightly, as I have tremendous respect for Pat Gregg, both professionally and personally. However, the skills and experience offered by Briana Spencer persuade me that she is the better choice for Position 7 on the Pendleton School Board.

**Kit Morgan  
Pendleton**

### A vote for Gomez is a vote for the future

I am writing this letter in support of Lili Gomez for Hermiston School Board Position 3.

I have known Lili for over 20 years, both as a classmate and a respected friend. Lili and I both attended Rocky Heights Elementary, Armand Larive Middle School and Hermiston High School together. Lili is a strong, experienced and compassionate leader.

Lili understands the challenges that students who grow up Hermiston face, because she was a student who grew up in Hermiston. Lili understands the complexities and challenges that first-generation college students from Hermiston face, because she herself was a first-generation college student from Hermiston. Lili’s unique lived experiences allow her to relate to the growing challenges that so many young people in Hermiston are impacted by.

There is no question in my mind that Lili Gomez is the most prepared, most experienced and most willing to do the work for all of our students. A vote for Lili Gomez is a vote for representation, a vote for our

students’ future and a vote for a Hermistonian. Please join me in supporting Lili Gomez for the Hermiston School Board.

**Mitch Thompson  
Hermiston**

### Spencer has a unique perspective

I am writing in support of Briana Spencer. I was honored to be the language arts teacher at Nixyaawii Community School for 12 years. Briana was a student of mine in the early years of the school but later transferred to PHS. She has certainly made her mark in the years since then!

Teaching at NCS, I got to know many Native American students. Culture often plays a big part in the lives of students of color, and respecting one’s elders is an expectation. There’s a deference implied that an older adult knows more than the young person and has knowledge and expertise to impart. By listening, he or she can learn valuable information. Briana is a good example of someone who has learned to listen first and then to take action.

Learning styles can also affect how well students do in classes, a fact of which I’m sure Briana is well aware. The majority of my students were Native American. I often received heartfelt and well-written essays, but the student might not speak up in class. I noticed more introspection and a need for more time to really think through what a student wanted to say, rather than to blurt out something just to be heard. Often, in traditional classrooms, a quick response to a question is expected, leaving students little time to recall information. In crowded high school classrooms, my students might not sit up front, might not speak up first, but they were listening and thinking.

Briana Spencer knows about students of color because she is one. Those who know her describe Briana as a sincere, hard-working, committed, and enthusiastic young woman who’s continually working to make this world a better, more inclusive place for all students. Briana is knowledgeable about the culture not only of Native students but also of the Latino and African American cultures.

Minority students are often the students who fall by the wayside and don’t graduate. She can offer insights and advice from a personal perspective. Briana is in a unique position to make a huge difference because she has experienced being a minority student at PHS, understands some of the challenges, and has lived in the area all her life.

Briana will care about and represent all the students at PHS. I am proud to endorse Briana Spencer for the Pendleton School Board, Position 7.

**Mary A. Green  
Pendleton**

### Gregg will bring his many skills to the Pendleton school board

I write in support of Patrick Gregg for Position 7 on the Pendleton School Board.

Having served on a number of boards myself, including the Northwest Power Planning Council, Oregon Environmental Quality Commission, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Oregon State Board of Higher Education, I know the skills and dedication required of a good board member. I have known Patrick Gregg for over 10 years and believe he is an excellent choice and would serve our community well as a member of the school board. He is intelligent, thoughtful, and will research and analyze all sides of a particular issue before reaching a decision. In addition, his position as a parent of school-age children and a business owner in our community is a valuable voice to have on our school board.

One of the key attributes of a good board member is the ability to work well with others and to consider viewpoints other than their own. By virtue of his legal training and experience Patrick has these skills, and I have seen him put them to good use in his practice. He is fair minded and level headed in his dealings with others. I am confident he will apply these same skills if he is elected to the Pendleton School Board.

Please join me in voting for Patrick Gregg for Position 7 on the Pendleton School Board.

**Henry Lorenzen  
Pendleton**

### Governor uses flawed science to corral us

The definition of science is objective observation — measurement and data (possibly using although not necessarily using mathematics as a tool). Evidence. Experiment and/or observation as benchmarks for testing hypotheses. Induction: reasoning to establish general rules or conclusions drawn from facts or examples. Repetition. Critical analysis. Verification and testing: critical exposure to scrutiny, peer review and assessment.

“Logical absolutes” refers to what are also known as “laws of thought.” Classical philosophers took these laws to be as follows: The law of identity — all things are equal to themselves. The law of noncontradiction — no proposition can both be and not be (the case).

Our governor has use flawed science and logic to intimidate and corral us. So has the federal government. Notice the word reasoning. There is no reasoning in her mandates, only platitudes.

If the vaccine works, why wear a mask? If one has had COVID, why get a vaccine? And finally, our so-called vaccine is not a vaccine. It has not been defined as one. All we get from government is propaganda.

**Roesch Kishpaugh  
Pendleton**