

The next 10 years of elections will be decided by you



BOBBY LEVY

OTHER VIEWS

The process of redistricting is well underway this year, and by the time it's done some of our state legislative districts could look completely different. We're also guaranteed to have a brand new congressional district somewhere in Oregon.

Required by the constitution once every 10 years, redistricting ensures that political boundaries reflect population changes. The major development this year is the new, sixth congressional seat, which will increase Oregon's representa-

MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the redistricting process and sign up to testify, visit oregonlegislature.gov/redistricting.

tion in Washington, D.C.

We don't know what these new legislative districts will look like yet, but we know one thing for sure: Your involvement can change everything.

For residents in Congressional District 2, you have a chance to voice your concerns during virtual public meetings that will be Wednesday, Sept. 8 starting at 1 p.m. and Friday, Sept. 10 starting at 8 a.m.

If you miss these times, anyone can sign up to testify on Monday, Sept. 13,

1-4 p.m. and 5:30-8:30 p.m.

It's important for Oregonians to participate in the process of redistricting because of the impact it has on a variety of issues, including where to put Oregon's sixth congressional seat and possible changes to who your elected officials can be.

That's why you're encouraged to take part in these virtual public meetings. You can influence how maps are drawn, and without your voice it will be harder to draw district lines that reflect your interests.

Oregon is at a high risk of gerrymandering this year according to reporting from sites such as Axios. This would favor one political party over another. Strong public participation can greatly reduce this risk.

You will get to weigh in during these public meetings, and you can even draw

your own maps using the tool at the state's redistricting website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/redistricting.

As you consider what is important to you regarding redistricting, a collection of different criteria used across the country can be found at this link.

I look forward to hearing about the strong public participation from our community on this extremely important issue. For this or any other topic, feel free to reach out to my office for questions or concerns.

Rep. Bobby Levy represents House District 58, which includes all of Union and Wallowa counties and a portion of Umatilla County, in the Oregon Legislature.

With gratitude, as a new BMCC chapter begins



CONNIE GREEN

OTHER VIEWS

Blue Mountain Community College will reach an important milestone on Sept. 7, when we will welcome our new president, Mark Browning, to our Eastern Oregon community.

Having had the opportunity to connect with Mark since the BMCC Board of Education approved his hiring in July, I am excited for the community to meet him and for the future of BMCC. Mark has bound-

less energy, vision, a passion for education, and the unique ability to create, cultivate and enhance meaningful relationships. I believe the BMCC Board has made a smart and wonderful selection in Mark to lead the college into its next chapter.

But before I hand over the reins to Mark, I wanted to take a moment to reflect upon my time as interim president at Blue Mountain for the past six months.

As many know, this is my second stint as interim president at BMCC in the past three years. I have come to love the college, appreciate and value its faculty and staff, and am grateful to the students who choose to come to BMCC and to the community members who have given so much support

to us over the years.

BMCC has definitely been through its share of challenges over the past few years, but I am humbled by the resiliency of the college's faculty and staff through it all. To me, their dedication to the college shows this community just how much they value BMCC and the work they do to support students. It is not always easy, to be sure, but it is certainly rewarding work when we see our students and communities succeed.

Our classified employees deserve a thank you for being the voice of care for BMCC. They take time to listen to our students and to their colleagues. Thank you to our faculty, who assist all students to learn,

achieve and grow in confidence. Their passion for their content areas empowers students every day to become passionate for their own new careers. A huge amount of gratitude is extended to our exempt technical employees who asked for more inclusion, who supported all other staff during times of change, and who continued to find ways to keep their areas functioning.

Thank you to our leadership team, who assisted me and all our employees, and believe in our right size, right direction and right growth of the college. You are all superheroes in my book.

Connie Green, Ph.D., is the interim president of Blue Mountain Community College.



Collaboration, not litigation, will build a sustainable future



KURT MILLER



ROBERT ECHENRODE

OTHER VIEWS

Gov. Kate Brown, in a recent op-ed, made the case for urgent action to help salmon and steelhead in defense of her decision to have Oregon litigate over the future of salmon and hydropower and the breaching of the four lower Snake River dams. Her urgency is admirable, but she follows a misguided solution that represents a major step backward in the progress the region has made to date.

It will hurt Oregon's communities. Roughly 1 million Oregonians are served by public power utilities, including UEC, that get power from BPA's hydroelectric and transmission assets, so her actions will be deeply felt.

Oregon's litigation threatens to greatly diminish the collaborative goals of the communities impacted the most, exposing the region to energy shortfalls and resulting in possible blackouts. Dams can support the regional power grid from blackouts during periods of life-threatening temperatures while supporting the energy transition championed by many Oregonians.

How can energy transition and salmon recovery, expected to have huge implications for the environment, economy and relationships around the region, be accomplished?

The region must all work collaboratively, pulling together for a balanced solution for all stakeholders. We can await technological advances, public sentiment and social awareness or by government regulations and policy. Yet to have our future driven by the courts through litigation on complex issues can have devastating impacts. We must find another path to success.

Oregon's litigious path is also misguided in another way. Oregon, as co-convenor of the newly formed Columbia Basin Collaborative, undermines the one existing forum that could possibly

bring the region together to help address the plight of salmon and move all the region forward. Instead, with Oregon as a litigant, trust in the process has been damaged and confuses Oregon's real agenda.

Instead of litigation, we urge innovation and collaboration, the only path forward Columbia Basin communities have known from which we have built a vibrant but fragile economy.

The region's farmers and food processors rely on a sustainable supply of water and stable energy prices — threatened by Oregon's litigation. When we say the lack of either will devastate this rural economy, it's not without precedent. In the 1980s, when energy prices spiked, crop prices plummeted and water pulled from the basalt aquifers dried up, farmers faced going broke. The same farmers who feed millions of Oregonians and the world.

Only innovation and collaboration spared our farmers — rapid development of precision irrigation techniques saved 25% of water and energy needs to grow the same crops, technology that Columbia Basin irrigators now help spread around the world.

If the dams are removed through litigation, and rolling blackouts occur and our farmers no longer have adequate supplies of water, it undermines the collaboration we've demonstrated over the years. When we raise concerns about litigation or ineffective decisions made in the name of salmon recovery, we truly fear for the region's way of life.

Gov. Brown, the citizens of the Columbia Basin welcome your offer to sit down and share these proven ways of building a sustainable future for all. The same innovation and collaboration are what we have to offer Oregon and the region to work through the opportunities before us for a successful energy transition and salmon recovery. We just ask: Can we sit down at the same table together?

Robert Echenrode is chief executive officer and general manager of Umatilla Electric and Kurt Miller is executive director of Northwest RiverPartners.

Improving Pendleton starts with Urban Renewal District



KEVIN MARTIN

OTHER VIEWS

The city of Pendleton is eager and interested in assisting our businesses and property owners be successful and thrive. Our Urban Renewal District programs provide financial and consulting support if you're interested in starting a business, expanding a business or wanting to get a property ready for a business.

Let's start with a little history. The Pendleton Urban Renewal District was developed in 2003 to promote the cultural and tourism heart

of Pendleton. It was developed with the guidance of an Advisory Committee, which was made up of Pendleton residents, business, and property owners. The URD is the result of the collaboration between citizens, business leaders, city and regional governments.

Pendleton's URD generally includes a wide swath running south along the Umatilla River and north of the railroad tracks and from Westgate to Highway 11.

The Urban Renewal Agency implements the plans for the district and is a separate governmental entity of the city of Pendleton. The city council members serve as directors of the agency and are known collectively as the Pendleton Development Commission. The city manager serves as the executive director. Public involvement is encouraged and has been key to the success of the program. The PDC continues to partner with citizens and businesses to ensure that ideas and projects initiated are considered and then managed by citizen volunteers.

The URD provides for improvements to tourist and cultural facilities, riverfront access and development, downtown parking, street and utility improvements, as well as to promote housing. It assists property owners in the rehabilitation, development or redevelopment of their properties. There is a focus on increasing the vitality of Pendleton's downtown by strengthening the downtown's role as the cultural heart of Pendleton.

There is a desire to connect downtown to the Umatilla Riverfront by looking to increase opportunities to access and enjoy the river, and that can take advantage of our unique and underutilized riverfront. We are exploring additional opportunities to improve and promote the entire district as a convention and tourism destination.

As most residents know and studies confirm, housing is a concern in Pendleton, all types of housing. A focus of the URD is to explore ways to develop a broad range of housing opportunities to assist in addressing this need. The "Love Your Home" program assists in addressing this need by providing support

through a partnership with two nonprofit agencies, CAPECO and GEODC, for folks interested in improvements to their homes or rentals.

The Jump Start Program provides free business consulting and low-cost loans. This program is available to assist a business in a successful startup or expansion. Examples include: OMG Burgers & Brew, Oregon Grain Growers Brand Distillery, Mac's Bar & Grill, Joe's Fiesta and Bela Bakery.

Our façade restoration grants are available to those interested in restoring or upgrading the exterior of a building. Projects can be as simple as a paint job or complex as a complete renovation. Examples include Sister's Cafe, the Association Building,

“PENDLETON'S URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT ... IS WORKING TO MAKE AMAZING CHANGES THAT IS MAKING OUR CITY MORE LIVABLE, BUSINESS FRIENDLY AND THE PLACE TO BE IN EASTERN OREGON.”

the Rainbow Cafe, the Brown Building, Hamley & Co, and the St. George Hotel.

Our second story and elevator programs are available to those who own a building but can't fully utilize the upper floors. Grants are available that could be used for commercial space or additional downtown housing. Examples include the Bowman Professional Build-

ing, Matlock Brownsfield Building and the Murphy Building.

Finally, you may be able to be reimbursed for the cost of permits needed to remodel or redevelop a property. Be sure to ask if city permit fees may be reimbursed when your project is completed. Do you have a building that not restorable or that you want to demolish and rebuild? Using the demolition program there may be some financial assistance as well. Your businesses might be able to use multiple programs to get maximum support for a project.

In addition to these programs, Pendleton is exploring ways to invest in our public infrastructure. There are multiple streets that need to be reconstructed, improving recreation infrastructure, and public spaces are all opportunities to improve the URD. Examples include the Til Taylor Park Renovation, Riverfront Plaza and the following streets: Southeast Seventh (Emigrant to Frazer), Southeast Sixth (Emigrant to Court), Southwest Seventh (Dorion to Court), Southwest Eighth (Frazer to Emigrant), Southwest Seventh (Frazer to Emigrant) and Southwest Fourth (Emigrant to Court).

Pendleton's Urban Renewal District, with citizen participation, coupled with business and city investments is working to make amazing changes that is making our city more livable, business friendly and the place to be in eastern Oregon.

If you have questions, please contact us at www.pendletonurbanrenewal.com or by phone: 541-966-0233.

Kevin Martin is retired from the U.S. Forest Service and represents Ward 1 on the Pendleton City Council.