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## HERMISTON

## Multiple elections with no candidates

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The field running for Hermiston city office is starting to come together but still has some gaps.

With less than a month before the filing deadline, the races for the Ward 4 city council seat and municipal judge position are contested, but one race has only one candidate while another has none.

Hermiston city recorder Lilly Alarcon-Strong said the city recently advertised the seats up for election in May with the hopes of attracting more candidates to the races.

This year, voters will consider candidates for Hermiston's four ward seats. The candidate's ward is determined by where they live, but all voters will still get a chance to weigh in on all four races. Below is a summary of the field for each race so far. The filing deadline is March 8.

### Ward 1 (northwest Hermiston)

Four years after falling just short, Jackie Linton is running for Ward 1 again.

Linton, a substitute teacher and retired postal worker, came in third in a three-way race for the Ward 1 seat in 2018, but she was only 33 votes shy of making the runoff election. The incumbent, Lori Davis, came in second during the primary but would go on to win the November general election.

Davis, an employee at Two Rivers Correctional Institution, Umatilla, was appointed to the council in 2010 and then won her first term a few months later. She ran unopposed in her first election, but secured second and third terms by winning contested elections.

Although the city website didn't list her as a candidate as of Wednesday, Feb. 9, Davis wrote in an email that she plans to file for reelection.

### Ward 2 (southwest Hermiston)

Incumbent Roy Barron said he took some time to consider his options, but he ultimately decided to submit his paperwork Feb. 9 for a second term.

"I was a little late to the party," he said, adding he wanted to try for a second term because he wants to continue the work the council has already started.

Barron, a teacher at Armand Larive Middle School, was a last-minute entrant for the Ward 2

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# Framework for the forests

## Committee completes desired conditions for Blue Mountain forest plan

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Groups long at odds on forest management have reached a consensus on goals and desired conditions that will frame how the U.S. Forest Service drafts land management plans on three national forests in Northeastern Oregon and South-eastern Washington.

At a meeting Jan. 25, the access subcommittee of the Blue Mountains Intergovernmental Council — or BIC for short — submitted its final rule and desired conditions to the full council.

The Forest Service formed the BIC, made up of county officials, tribal members and other stakeholders from the Blue Mountain region, after the agency's proposed 2018 management plan revision fizzled in the face of intense public scrutiny.

The three national forests covered by the management plan — the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur — are collectively known as the Blue Mountain Forest and make up a third of Oregon's national forest land.

Each forest has its individual resource and management plans, with desired conditions and goals spelled out. While the plans do not dictate project-level decisions, the desired conditions will form a foundation for the broader guidelines surrounding key issues such as forest access, elk

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A mountain goat moves up a ridge in the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness.

Blue Mountain Eagle, File

riety, forest health and grazing when the Forest Service begins the process of revising its management plan for the Blue Mountain Forest.

Craig Trulock, Malheur National Forest supervisor, said he is not sure when the revision process would begin. However, he said a proposal has been forwarded to U.S. Forest Service headquarters in Washington, D.C., to put a team together to begin drafting the revision.

From the beginning, Trulock said, the idea was to seek compromise and

solutions on as many issues as possible.

"I think we made huge progress with the BIC on understanding each other," Trulock said.

The Forest Service's 2018 management plan revision, which was drafted before Trulock was named Malheur's supervisor, received intense backlash. The plan called for an increase in thinning dry upland forests to improve wildfire resilience while doubling the current timber harvest and designating 70,500 acres of new wilderness.

The Eastern Oregon Counties Association, to which Grant belongs, listed

eight main objections, including economics; access; management area designation; pace and scale of restoration; grazing; fire and salvage logging; coordination between agencies; and wildlife.

The counties argued the agency's plan would close roads and limit livestock grazing while failing to thin enough of the woods to boost timber jobs or lower the risk of large wildfires.

The BIC subcommittee revised the list of conditions pertaining to a number of key issues, including access, elk security, wilderness and other set-asides.

### Forest access

In its final draft document of desired conditions, the BIC's access subcommittee wrote forest access was the most contentious topic during the 2018 forest plan revision process.

Committee member Bill Harvey said the forest roads have been used by people in rural areas for 75 to 80 years.

Harvey, a Baker County commissioner, said people have lived, worked and played in the Blue Mountains their whole lives.

"Why, in God's name," Harvey said, "would we want to take that right away?"

### Public use

The group writes that the public desires to be well informed on forest access. It wants the agency to provide an up-to-date and comprehensive inventory of all forest roads and the status of those roads.

This was an important desired condition for subcommittee member Mark Owens, a state representative from Crane, who told the Blue Mountain Eagle

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A view of Strawberry Mountain in the Malheur National Forest.

Blue Mountain Eagle, File

## COVID-19

## Units in Eastern Oregon prisons still quarantined

By ALEX WITTEWER  
EO Media Group

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution and Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla County still have housing units in quarantine due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus throughout their facilities, according to prison officials.

Powder River Correctional Facility in Baker County is in a heightened state of alert and testing according to the Oregon Department of Corrections COVID-19 tracker, as cases rose amongst the staff and prisoner population at the end of January. Seven out of the 15 prisons in Oregon as of Tuesday, Feb. 8, had units under quarantine.

Overall, case numbers had increased dramatically through

January, peaking at 286 active cases for Two Rivers on Jan. 20. In December, those numbers were in the single digits.

Those case numbers fell throughout the weeks. As of Feb. 8, Two Rivers had just one active case of COVID-19.

As a percentage of total cases during the entire pandemic against the number of beds at each facility, Two Rivers ranked the highest by a wide margin. The case-to-bed rate was at 68%, while the average across all prisons in Oregon was 33.3%.

### Critic blames prison staff for virus spread

Corrections officials wouldn't say whether or not the COVID-19 cases that spurred a large spike at Two Rivers was due to a staff member,

but case numbers and dates shared with EO Media Group show staff at Two Rivers had tested positive on Dec. 29, just 10 days before members of the prison population showed a spike in positive tests.

"There is no way of knowing exactly how each positive case originates or is spread," said Betty Bernt, communications manager for DOC. "When an individual comes into our intake unit, our current process is to test all adults in custody."

Juan Chavez, project director and attorney with the Oregon Justice Resource Center, disagrees.

"There's only one way for the virus to get in, and that's through the staff," he said. "It's abundantly clear that mask wearing has been scant in particular with correctional officers. They haven't been enforcing

the mask wearing policy, they just let it slide. They're more afraid of losing staff than they are of killing people, in my mind."

Chavez noted because intake goes through Coffee Creek Correctional Facility — DOC's intake facility in Wilsonville where adults in custody are tested, isolated and quarantined before being transferred to other parts of the state — the possibility of an inmate bringing the virus into a different prison is remote.

The Oregon Justice Resource Center is involved in a class action lawsuit against the Department of Corrections due to conditions at the prisons regarding COVID-19 safety. That lawsuit is expected to go before

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