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OUR VIEW

Get involved, run for city office

So far it doesn't look like there will be any competitive races for the Pendleton City Council and while there are several individuals seeking reelection at least one position — an at-large seat — has no candidates.

That should change and soon.

Now, incumbents Carole Innes, of Ward 1, and Linda Neuman, of Ward 3, have filed for reelection along with Councilor McKennon McDonald, from Ward 2. Steve Campbell, who was appointed as an at-large councilor, has not filed but said he will.

He could face opposition from Addison Schulberg, manager of the Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., who has filed to run as an at-large candidate. Or Schulberg could run for the other at-large post. Councilor Jake Cambier now holds that, but he is not seeking reelection.

The lack of opponents to any of the councilors is a statement but what that statement implies is hard to know. Do voters believe the current councilors are doing fine so there is no need to get involved? Is it a lack of concern? A disconnection from democracy?
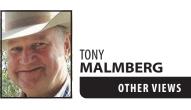
Hard to tell. Yet there are many good reasons for an individual to decide to run for a council seat.

No. 1, for anyone who wants to get involved in their community, running for a local office is the best way to do it. Local lawmakers have a lot of power — they can raise taxes, make investments with taxpayer dollars, and guide a city into the future with thoughtful planning.

No. 2, there is always more than one way to fashion policy. New ideas from new people help a council or elected board diversify its outlook.

No. 3, Democracy needs good leaders. Now, especially, our form of government needs more buy-in from just about every voter. We need more diversity and more women to run for office.

By running for office, a local resident can bring a new perspective and capture the opportunity to advocate for their cause in a way that will invite valuable input.

Running for office may seem like a difficult endeavor but if you are considering it there is a good chance there are a fair number of people who share your outlook and would be supportive.

In the end, your voice needs to be heard and the best way to do that is to run for office. Even if you lose, you'll make a statement regarding civic duty and be able to perhaps move the political needle — so to speak — a little.

So interested individuals should consider it carefully and then get involved and run for office.

WE CONTINUE TO FOLLOW SCIENCE!

BLUE STATES

EASING OF MASK MANDATES

METEOROLOGY

EASING OF MASK MANDATES

Managing irrigation good for business, salmon

TONY MALMBERG
OTHER VIEWS

Droughts are becoming more frequent and intense. It can feel like climate change is stalking farmers and ranchers. The good news? Irrigators can play a unique role in helping ourselves through these trying conditions.

I've lived on ranchlands in Nebraska's Sandhills, Wyoming and now the grasslands of Northeastern Oregon. My wife and I have run a direct-to-consumer, grassfed beef and lamb business for more than two decades. Our successes have come when pursuing regenerative agriculture, which means adding more life. When biodiversity thrives, there's a good chance our revenue will do the same.

This is increasingly urgent for other reasons as well. Salmon in parts of the region are perilously close to extinction. Our livelihoods, regional prosperity and the future of salmon are all linked. It may come as a surprise, but the irrigator vs. salmon debate is not a zero-sum game. We can coexist, prosperously.

Regenerative management practices — such as minimizing overgrazing, scheduling irrigation and ensuring plant recovery — can increase soil organic matter — SOM — and retain water in our soil mantle.

Better irrigation and grazing practices during the good moisture years make us more resilient during dry years. It's also good for salmon habitat, which benefits the whole region.

On the flip-side, over-irrigation, hot-season irrigation and down-cut rivers make us more susceptible to drought. Over-irrigation suffocates our soil through compaction. Compaction creates a barrier, preventing roots from accessing deeper moisture, minerals and nutrients. By monitoring available water content, we can avoid this.

Irrigation saturates the soil. If one were to make a ball of the soil and squeeze, water would ooze out, indicating there is more than 50% available water content, or AWC. As days go by, the surface dries. If we can't form a ball, that tells us the soil is drier than 50% AWC. On our ranch, we generally don't want to irrigate until the available water content of 50% drops to at least 8 inches. This allows the roots of grasses to follow water down and build regenerative soils for better water retention and less exposure to drought.

In the hot season irrigation, we shouldn't lose sight of the geography we work within — and use it to our advantage. High mountain meadows in most of the western United States are composed of cool season plants. These plants evolved to shut down, or senesce, when temperatures reach 70 degrees.

In Northeastern Oregon, this happens around mid-July. Continued irrigation may keep cool season plants green, but they will not produce significant biomass. By keeping this potential irrigation water in stream during the hot season, we can keep rivers alive, grow riparian vegetation and cool rivers for salmon — a win-win.

By contrast, down-cut rivers are a lose-lose. They drain the productive flood plain, dry up meadows and destroy critical salmon habitat. We should instead be slowing the flow of water on the uplands with SOM, saturating the flood plain for continued cold river recharge in the summer and keeping rivers flowing during the hot season.

The health and wealth of our region is connected to the salmon runs that define our rivers and streams. The loss of salmon imperils tribes, fishermen, main street businesses and Northwesterners' very identity, from the Pacific coast to the Rocky Mountains.

Fortunately, a solution is within reach. Last year, Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, presented a plan to remove the lower Snake River dams to advance salmon recovery — and replace the services the dams provide, like irrigation. It's a far-reaching and visionary proposal with investments to ensure all communities remain whole, to transform and strengthen our region.

His proposal includes mechanisms to ensure ranchers and farmers have the water they need to do the work we're all proud of. And with regenerative management, we can increase our production as we heal the landscape. We now know that our sector can actually build biodiversity, increase SOM, reconnect rivers to floodplains, address climate change and insulate ranchers from drought.

When we have regenerative soil and functional rivers, we better our own livelihoods — and the sustainable existence of salmon as well.

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Tony Malmberg has been a rancher and practitioner of holistic management for more than 30 years. He's received numerous awards for his work, including the National Environment Stewardship Award from the National Cattlemen's Association. He and his wife, Andrea, ranch in Union County.

YOUR VIEWS

No joke? No kidding.

In response to Annie Fowler's recent offering ("Being sick with COVID-19 is no joke," Feb. 9, 2022) about her battle with COVID-19, I'm left nearly speechless. Which part of COVID-19 did she find to be a "joke" prior to her stint in the hospital? Was it the 910,000 American deaths that she found amusing? Was it the toll taken on children, families, businesses, or the economy?

Maybe I'm losing my sense of humor. I take umbrage at the fact that Fowler needed a trip to the hospital to recognize it's no joke. She regales us with the tale of her personal doctor giving her the "blessing" to forgo vaccination, due to concerns about blood clots. It doesn't take much looking to find that the prevalence of blood clots due to receiving the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is 57 cases out of 16.9 million recipients (as of December), or that no correlation between clots and the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines has been established. It's also easy to find a study that estimates that a person is as much as 10 times more likely to develop blood clots in the brain as a result of contracting COVID-19 than they are from receiving a vaccine.

She states the doctor in the hospital told her they had "seen several vaccinated people come through with COVID-19." While the anecdote is nice, it doesn't stack up all that well with the data, which shows that unvaccinated adults are 16 times more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 than their fully vaccinated counterparts.

Finally, Fowler shares the story of a local coach who was hospitalized and subsequently required to tote around an oxygen tank as a result of his bout with COVID-19. He said he "had the shots, but it didn't make a difference." We'll never know for sure if there was a difference, but a vaccinated 65-year-old asthmatic surviving a battle with COVID-19 is actually supported by the data. Unvaccinated 65-plus-year-olds are 68 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than their fully-vaccinated counterparts. So, perhaps the reason he was hospitalized and lived was a direct result of his vaccination status.

Perhaps.

Again, maybe I'm losing my sense of humor, but I don't get the joke. I don't understand how, after two years of watching people die and having access to all of the "research" one could possibly care to access, anyone could have still been uncertain about the seriousness of COVID-19. I'm glad Fowler and coach Clair Costello are OK. I just wish we weren't still trying to convince people that COVID-19 isn't a joke.

John Taber
Pendleton

If only — it's time city knows about residents' priorities

It's time to let your ward representatives on the Pendleton City Council and the mayor know about our priorities.

If residents were no longer required to dodge potholes to avoid tire damage and alignment issues on their daily commutes. If we knew that deferred maintenance on our city-owned facilities was a thing of the past. If our children were no longer standing in the wind and rain waiting for a school bus while transients sit sheltered from the wind and rain in a covered bus stop waiting for a free bus. If city employees, with the exception of the police and fire chiefs, were no longer provided with city-owned vehicles to drive to and from work at our expense. If we knew the street sweeper was coming through our neighborhoods once a week just like the garbage truck (the downtown merchants already get that service twice a week). If our general fund was receiving even a small amount of that revenue the city claims the airport is generating from the millions of our tax dollars that's been invested. If the city could possibly redesign our city hall parking lot so that during snow removal the curbing isn't destroyed each year.

If, well there are a whole host of other high priority projects that would benefit residents directly, and if they were no longer an issue, perhaps carports could be constructed in city hall's back parking lot where those vans and buses are stored, not a bus barn and not at the airport, one of the most ridiculous locations in the city. They might just as well build it in Hermiston.

City hall claims you should support this project because it'll be paid for with free money, a grant, a grant funded by, yup you guessed it, our taxes.

Free? Hardly.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton