

MORROW COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Superintendent search cut to three candidates

By **ERICK PETERSON**
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — The search for a new Morrow County School District superintendent is down to three.

One district employee, Mathew Combe, is among the finalists. The other two, Chester Bradshaw and Jose Silva, are working in Idaho and Nevada, respectively.

“Any of the three could potentially do a good job for us,” Becky Kindle, Morrow County School District board chair, said.

The district released the names of the prospective superintendents, as well as information about each candidate in a recent press release.

Bradshaw is superintendent at Sugar Salem School District in Sugar City, Idaho, near the state’s border with Wyoming. The district has about 540 students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, while Morrow County School District has closer to 2,200. Bradshaw holds a education specialist degree from Idaho State University.

Silva is principal of the Kermit R. Booker Sr. Innovative Elementary School with the Clark County School District in Las Vegas. He holds a master’s in education from Sierra Nevada College and a doctorate of education from Argosy University.

Combe is the director of maintenance and facilities and a principal in the district. Other credentials include being a regional alternative education coordinator with the Union Baker Education Service District, as well as a master’s degree in education from Sierra Nevada College.

He works for Heppner Junior/Senior High School.

The Teacher Standards and Practices Commission of Oregon filed a report on Combe regarding a matter in 2004 that resulted in a 30-day suspension in 2009. The report provides a stipulation of facts, including an admission of submitting one or more travel reimbursement claims when he was a teacher at Union Baker Education Service District. It states he claimed “mileage that he did not incur while employed by the UBESD.”

“He claimed reimbursement for personal mileage when he actually drove a UBESD vehicle on business, or when he did not make the trip claimed,” the report states. “Mr. Combe asserts that these reimbursements were actually related to other, non-travel, work-related expenses, and that he had followed his supervisor’s direction in categorizing them as travel-expense reimbursement requests.”

The stipulation of facts within the report also mentions that Combe “cooperated with, and assisted, law enforcement officials in their investigation into wide-ranging allegations of impropri-

ety involving a number of UBESD staff and administrators.”

The conclusion of the report is Combe did submit improper claims for travel reimbursement and his conduct “constituted gross neglect of duty.”

School district looks for positivity in new superintendent

Board Chair Kindle said she was not concerned about the past impropriety. She said the board is happy with all of its remaining candidates.

“We went through a long process and spent a long time in our screening committee and board and reviewed all candidates, and those were the ones that we wanted to revisit some more,” she said.

She acknowledged the final choice, whoever it is, will be following a superintendent who has “done a good job.”

As the outgoing superintendent, Dirk Dirksen said he is not part of the selection process for his replacement. He did, however, offer a few words on the sort of person he would like to see hired.

He said the person who ends up filling his shoes should be “one who looks into the future” and makes decisions based on student needs.

“We’ve just gone through a two-year cycle where everything’s been kind of, I’m just going to say, in a bad place with mandates and politics and things like that,” Dirksen said. “We just need to work on a positive attitude and a positive outlook of what we’re going to see in the future in education.”

The school district stated the finalists would be gathered Tuesday and Wednesday, March 15 and 16, for discussion. They were scheduled to meet with staff, students and community members.

Gun show attracts firearms enthusiasts



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

A visitor to the Pendleton Gun Show inspects a firearm on Saturday, March 12, 2022, at the Pendleton Convention Center. The Pendleton City Club sponsors the gun show and uses the proceeds for youth activities.

UMATILLA COUNTY

Sheriff’s office seeks fleet upgrades

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners considers a big request Wednesday, March 16, to upgrade the fleet of vehicle for the sheriff’s office.

The sheriff’s office is seeking approval to replace eight Dodge Durango police vehicles.

- Five fully equipped Dodge Durango police package patrol vehicles at a cost of \$84,346 per year for four years.

- One equipped Dodge Durango police package patrol vehicle at a cost of \$10,542.75 per year for four years. The cost is less for this vehicle, according to the sheriff’s office, because it is reusing equipment from another vehicle.

- One fully equipped Dodge Durango police package vehicle for the captain for \$17,569.54 per year for four

years. This lease includes equipment and installation costs for a transport van for the jail the sheriff’s office already owns.

• And one Dodge Durango for the detective for \$15,089.71 per year for four years.

The upgrades are necessary to maintain the fleet program in the most effective and efficient manner, according to a memo from the sheriff’s office to the county board and due to supply chain shortages.

The sheriff’s office is asking the county board for approval to proceed with the lease of the eight vehicles with Bancorp and ERS for a total annual cost of \$127,549 per year for four years.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners have a number of additional matters to move through when it meets starting at 9 a.m. at the Umatilla County Courthouse, 216 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton, in room 130.

The board is holding two public hearings on trail plans and considering the proposal to expand the Greater Hermiston Enterprise Zone.

The enterprise zone proposal is near the top of the board’s agenda. The Hermiston City Council during its meeting Feb. 28 approved a resolution for the expansion of the zone, which adds approximately 1.34 square miles to the zone outside the city limits. The change also requires the approval of the county commissioners.

The public hearings are part of the process for the county to adopt or reject the concept plans for the Umatilla River Trail and Blue Mountain Region Trail.

The Umatilla River Trail would connect the cities of Umatilla, Hermiston, Stanfield and Echo, with a focus along the Umatilla River while using existing trails and paths. Stakeholder and

public involvement helped develop the plan, according to the memo to the county board.

The Walla Walla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization with the support of the National Park Service developed the Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan, which calls for using existing sidewalks and proposed sidewalk paths, multi-use trails, paved paths and unpaved trails. The plan covers Milton-Freewater and portions of northeastern Umatilla County.

The board starts off the meeting with presentations from the Umatilla Basin Watershed Council and Barnett & Moro P.C., of Hermiston, which will deliver its report on the audit for fiscal year 2021.

For more information and access to the full meeting agenda, visit <https://www.co.umatilla.or.us/departments/bcc>.

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