

Two principals named finalists for Pendleton superintendent

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Four months into its superintendent search, the Pendleton School District is down to two candidates.

On Thursday, March 31, the district will host Kevin Headings, the principal of West Park Elementary School in Hermiston, and Kim Casey, the principal of Grandview High School in Grandview, Washington, to introduce themselves to the community. Each finalist will get 45



Casey



Headings

minutes to talk about themselves and field questions from the public 3:30-5:15 p.m. at the district office, 107 N.W. 10th St.

Headings got his bachelor's degree from Bethel College in Kansas, where he also

started his teaching career as a middle school teacher. He soon transitioned his education career to Oregon, working as a teacher in the Lebanon School District and for Western Mennonite High School in Salem.

Headings started his career in public school administration as a K-6 principal in Stanfield in 2005. Headings ascended to the superintendent position in 2009 and led Stanfield for several years before moving to West Park in 2013, where he's remained

ever since. He holds a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of Oregon.

Casey is based out of Grandview, a town of nearly 11,000 people situated halfway between Kennewick and Yakima. She got her start as a high school business education teacher, but also taught at the postsecondary level through stints as an adult education teacher at Yakima Valley College and as an adjunct professor at Eastern Washington University.

Casey transitioned to administration in 2013 when she became principal of Compass High School, Grandview's alternative high school, and then took over Grandview High School two years later. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Central Washington University, a master's degree in business administration from the University of Phoenix and is working on her superintendent credential from Washington State University.

The Pendleton School Board will deliberate about the candidates following the final round of interviews and could make a decision on April 1 at the earliest. The board expects to formally hire a new superintendent at its April 11 board meeting.

Both Headings and Casey are vying to replace Superintendent Chris Fritsch, who announced his impending retirement in November. The new superintendent is expected to start their position on July 1.

PENDLETON

Council candidates hard to come by

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Pendleton voters won't officially finish picking their preferred candidates for city council until May 17, but the races effectively ended on March 8.

That day marked the filing deadline for five city council seats up for election in 2022. But a lack of interest meant only one candidate filed for each seat, all but assuring them new terms and negating a need for campaigning.

While Pendleton voters won't get much of a choice this May, community members seemed much more interested in joining the council two years ago. When former Councilor Paul Chalmers resigned in October 2020, the council received nine applications to replace him.

The council chose banker Steve Campbell to fill Chalmers' at-large seat, and because Chalmers resigned between his reelection and the start of his new term, Campbell is on the ballot again this year. But no one else from the group filed to run for election in 2022.

Roy Jones, the lodging director at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, was the runner-up to Campbell back in 2020.

In an interview, Jones said applying for the vacant seat on the council felt like answering a call for volunteers, and he wanted to give back to his community. Although he was commit-

ted to stewarding the seat for the next two years if he was chosen, Jones said he wasn't sure if he was interested in running for office.

"Running for office is a little more of a different thing than appointment," he said.

Jones said he thought that Campbell was a "fantastic choice," and he wasn't sure he would have applied if he had known Campbell was also seeking the seat. After the council made the appointment, Campbell invited Jones to join the Pendleton Development Commission's advisory committee, a group that helps craft policy for the urban renewal district before it goes in front of the full commission, and he's happy to contribute to the city in that role.

Lonnie Read was another candidate who vied for a seat in 2020 but took a pass in 2022.

A retired accountant, Read said he was fresh from leaving his job in 2020 and looking to jump into something right away. But after the council passed him over, he learned that he enjoyed the extra time for travel and family retirement afforded him. Read left the door open to seeking office in the future, but 2022 was not the right time for him.

Not every local election is dealing with a lack of interest. All but one municipal race in Hermiston is contested. And both seats up for election for the

Umatilla County Board of Commissioners are heavily contested.

But for many city council and school board seats, attracting only one or no candidates to a race is the rule rather than the exception.

In 2021, every school board race was contested for the first time in years. But just two years prior, one of the races had to go to write-in votes because no candidates filed. In Milton-Freewater, contested city council races have become rare in recent years. And in most years, all races for Helix City Council go to write-in votes after nobody files for any seats.

Pendleton Mayor John Turner didn't express surprise that the Pendleton City Council didn't attract more candidates.

Turner said city councilors have to take satisfaction in the work that they do while dealing with angry constituents, their only direct compensation a small stipend. Residents who are only interested in one or two local issues tend not to be good fits on the council.

While voters not being able to make a choice on local elections could be perceived as a blow to local democracy, Turner took a more optimistic view, saying that it was evidence that people were broadly satisfied with the council's work.

It was an opinion echoed by Jones and Read.

"I have faith in the sitting city council," Read said.

Council adds youth advisors

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The next Hermiston City Council meeting will take place with new youth advisors, as well as a public hearing on the South Hermiston Industrial Park and city pensions.

The meeting is Monday, March 28, at 7 p.m. at the Hermiston Community Center, 415 S. Highway 395.

Hermiston Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan on March 25 expressed excitement over the city's new youth advisors as he previewed the meeting.

The advisors, he said, are 12 Hermiston High School students, who will be sitting shoulder-to-shoulder with city councilors during the meeting. They were introduced at a previous city council meeting.

"It'll be interesting," Morgan said.

The teenagers, he added, will not be voting on anything but will be asked for their input on issues during the meeting.

Morgan said it will be a learning opportunity for everyone involved. The students, he said, will have the chance to see how government works. But city officials should learn, too, he said.

Young people, Morgan said, have a different perspective than older people do. While elders have the benefit of experience, youngsters have a vested interest in the future. Likely to live longer than older people, young people generally want to preserve resources and build for a better tomorrow, he said.

This being the case, the assistant city manager said he was looking forward to what the new youth advisory board will have to say.

Young people have attended city council meetings in the past, Morgan said. They have never, to Morgan's recollection, though, had a position like they will on Monday, at least not in Hermiston. Morgan stated that there are cities that have done what Hermiston is now starting, and it has worked well for those involved.

City Manager Byron Smith and a Hermiston High School civics teacher came together to arrange this project, Morgan said.

"We'll see where it goes," he added.

On the agenda

The new youth advisors will have opportunities to weigh in on at least a couple of agenda items. One of these items relates to SHIP,

the industrial park west of Highway 395 and near the Walmart Distribution Center. Visitors to the city council meeting will be able to voice their opinions, too, as this is a public hearing.

Morgan said he is offering good news to landowners with property at the park. Improvements to the park, he said, were estimated at \$2.9 million. The final cost, however, is \$1.99 million, thanks to savings made by the city, he said.

Landowners will each pay a portion of these costs, so they should be happy that the project is under budget, Morgan said.

At the meeting, the landowners will be informed about their opportunities to pay their debt in installments.

Also on the agenda, the council will vote on Resolution 2215, which would authorize the issuance of approximately \$15,445,054 in pension obligation bonds to address the city's unfunded pension liability and reduce its overall costs with regards to ongoing PERS contributions, according to the agenda.

Morgan explained the resolution is akin to "refinancing your mortgage, borrowing money at a cheaper rate."

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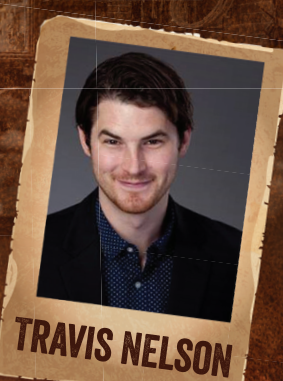
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