

MILTON-FREEWATER

# Umatilla County commission candidates make their pitches

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

**MILTON-FREEWATER** — At the third commissioners forum sponsored by the Umatilla County Republican Party, the candidates leaned into their sales pitches.

Whether it was playing up their personas as accomplished political leaders, experienced business owners or ardent conservative activists, the nine candidates who attended the Friday, April 8, event at the Milton-Freewater Community Building tried to use their personal experiences to stand out from the pack.

The forum drew full attendance from all the candidates for both seats up for election on May 17. The Position 1 seat is open and has drawn six candidates: Bob Barton of Hermiston, Jesse Bonifer of Athena, Susan Bower of Pendleton, David Nelson of Pendleton, Cindy Timmons of Milton-Freewater and Alvin Young of Hermiston. Position 2 Commissioner John Shafer is running for reelection against HollyJo Beers and Rick Pullen, both of Pendleton.

Despite the large field, the candidates did reach a consensus on some issues. Nearly all the candidates opposed the Umatilla County Charter Committee's recommendation to hire a county manager. The one holdout came from Pullen, a former county employee, who said the committee's recommendation should have gone to the ballot.

"They bring that to the commissioners, it's expected from the committee, that their 18 months, was not just a waste

of time (and) the commissioners will bring that recommendation forward," he said.

Beers, an activist with the right wing militia group Three Percenters, said she aimed to improve transparency in the county, partially born out of her own frustration in trying to reach elected officials.

"I find it very difficult a lot of times to be able to reach any official in this campaign to talk to them," she said. "They even don't answer the phone because they're busy, and I understand that, but they don't call you back either."

Shafer touted his endorsements from all of Umatilla County's legislative and U.S. House representatives and said he delivered on improving the county's mental health services. With the Legislature appropriating money to the county to build a new mental health facility, Shafer said he was ready to continue the effort.

"We're going to build an acute psychiatric care facility," he said. "There's already one in Hermiston that Lifeways shut down. It was like somebody sucked the oxygen out of the room. It's been my mission to open up another one. And if we can't get that one built, we're going to build another one."

Barton, a contractor, on a question about allowing a city to absorb exclusive farm use land to be absorbed into an urban growth boundary said he would be open to it if the land in question was low-value farmland.

"We're going to have to develop properties, ladies and gentleman," he said.

Bonifer, a Three Percenter and business owner, said the county needed to prepare for natural disasters, including fires, floods and earthquakes, but also should look into acquiring food preserves for more conspiratorial outcomes.

"I believe we are looking at World War III and possibly a civil war," he said. "So we need to be prepared for that as well."

Nelson frequently referenced his time in the Oregon Senate, where he represented the county for more than a decade. Nelson said he could leverage his relationships in Salem to benefit the county while drawing on his experience crafting state budgets to manage the county's finances.

"I know what budgets are all about and I think that's one of the most important things in Umatilla County," he said.

The only candidate in the field from Milton-Freewater, Timmons told the hometown audience that she ran for board of commissioners to make sure her part of the county had representation. She also highlighted how she was managing her campaign budget, using it as an example of efficient and effective leadership.

"If you look at (my campaign account), I am in the positive and I continue to be that way," she said. "And I think that's a good example of how you should run your finances. You should run in the black. You should stay within your means."

Following the May 17 election, the two candidates in each races that garner the most votes will move on to a November runoff.



East Oregonian, File

**Cody McKillip tends to his meat during the Buckaroo BBQ Challenge on May 1, 2021, at the Pendleton Convention Center. Organizers are seeking contestants for the April 30, 2022, event, which takes place during Pendleton Cattle Barons Weekend. Teams must register by April 23.**

## Get ready, get set — grill

### Buckaroo BBQ Challenge doubles prize purse

By TAMMY MALGESINI  
East Oregonian

**PENDLETON** — Calling all backyard grillers — registration is open for the annual Buckaroo BBQ Challenge. Organizers are seeking competitors for the team event, held April 30 during Pendleton Cattle Barons Weekend.

The popular barbecue contest is heating up with a larger purse than ever — \$5,000 in prize money is up for grabs, Kristen Dollarhide of Travel Pendleton said in a press release. Dollarhide, who also serves as the Buckaroo BBQ Challenge director, said the Pacific Northwest BBQ Association is sanctioning the 2022 event.

"With the purse now doubled from what it was in the past, we hope we'll get a wide variety of competitors — both local and from around the Northwest — at the event," she said. "It's always a great event, and

we're looking forward to having a big crowd again this year."

Teams can show off their sizzling skills with tri-tip, baby back pork ribs and chicken. The team entry fee is \$100. Open to 40 teams, the registration deadline is April 23.

Competitors will be supplied with two trimmed tri-tip roasts from Painted Hills Natural Beef and three racks of ribs from Hill Meat Company. Contestants will supply their own chicken. Grill masters will set up their cooking spaces in a designated area of the parking lot of the Pendleton Convention Center.

The overall grand champion will pocket \$1,025, and the reserve grand champion will take home \$750. In addition, first through sixth place will be awarded in each meat category — with cash prizes ranging from \$300 to \$75.

Also, get ready to smoke the tri-tip competition with the coveted People's Choice Award. In addition to bragging rights and trophies, cash prizes will be dished out to first through third places.

People's choice judging

buttons are \$5 each, which allows the public to sample each contestant's tri-tip entry — no tasting samples of chicken and ribs — and then cast a vote for their favorite. In anticipation of the venue selling 300-400 sampling buttons, teams may bring additional tri-tip to barbecue for the people's choice contest.

Established as a nonprofit organization in 2008, Pendleton Cattle Barons Weekend showcases Western heritage. It ropes in money to provide scholarships to area students who are interested in furthering their education in the field of agriculture.

Activities in and around the Pendleton Convention Center include a trade show, an artistry show and classes, the Western Select horse and more. For more information about the April 29-30 event, visit [www.cattlebarons.net](http://www.cattlebarons.net).

For more information about the Buckaroo BBQ Challenge, including rules and to register, go to [www.pnwba.com/event-4748782](http://www.pnwba.com/event-4748782). For questions, contact Dollarhide at [kristen@travelpendleton.com](mailto:kristen@travelpendleton.com) or 541-276-7411.

## Fire breaks out at Pendleton bakery

East Oregonian

**PENDLETON** — A fire broke out Saturday night, April 9, at Rolling Stone Bakery on Main Street, Pendleton. But the business still is filling orders.

Pendleton Fire Chief Jim Critchley said the callout for the fire at the business, 213 S. Main St., came at 7:34 p.m. Firefighters were on the scene a couple of minutes later and had water dousing flames by 7:40 p.m. Critchley said five minutes after that, the fire was out.

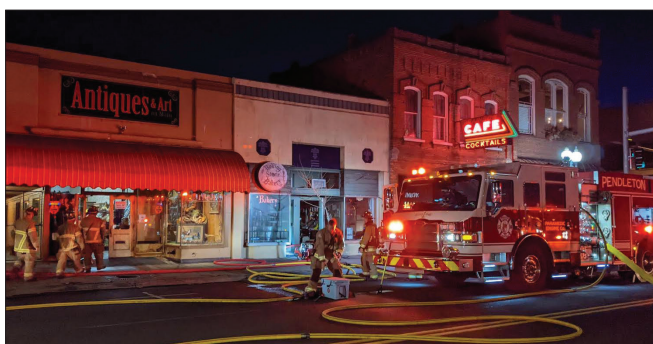
Smoke from the fire wafted into neighboring businesses and residences, and firefighters checked those as well.

"We just have to make sure it doesn't extend any where else," Critchley said.

Police and fire blocked off the north end of the 200 block of South Main, and the Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District also responded. Critchley said no one was in the bakery when crews arrived.

Speaking the morning of April 11, he said the cause of the fire appears to be electrical, and the bakery won't be operating there for a while.

However, he said, the city is allowing Rolling Stone to



Phil Wright/East Oregonian

**Firefighters enter Antiques & Art on Main on Saturday night, April 9, 2022, in downtown Pendleton, following a fire at the Rolling Stone Bakery next door.**

use the facilities at the Pendleton Convention Center to make good on orders. Critchley also said businesses next door to Rolling Stone, including the Rainbow Cafe, had some cleaning up to do after the fire, but otherwise could continue to operate.

The Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District responded to the bakery fire as well. Critchley said Pendleton was able to reciprocate at about 1 a.m. on April 10, sending one of the crews that was at the Rolling Stone fire to assist with a fire call in Pilot Rock.

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