

Hermiston City Council candidates make their cases

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian



Hermiston City Council candidates express their views at a candidate forum Tuesday, April 12, 2022, at the Hermiston Community Center.

Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Toward the end of a candidate forum Tuesday, April 12, in Hermiston, a couple of city council candidates pointed out distinctions between this event and ones like it at higher echelons of government.

“City council is different,” Roy Barron said.

An incumbent who is running for reelection May 17, Barron stated this sort of forum is more contentious on state and federal levels.

Sharing this sentiment, candidate David McCarthy voiced his approval of the entire group of candidates, including his opponent.

“Anyone here would do a good job,” McCarthy said.

Most of the city council candidates in the upcoming election participated in the forum, which the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce organized and held at the Hermiston Community Center.

Four of eight seats, all ward positions, are up for election this year. Three of the incumbents each a single opponent.

Jackie Myers, city councilor for Ward 3, is running unopposed and was not present.

Candidates present were Lori Davis, Ward 1 councilor and her challenger, Jackie Linton; Barron, Ward 2 councilor and his challenger, Stan Stradley; and Phillip Spicerkuhn, Ward 4 councilor and his challenger, McCarthy.

Angela Pursel, Hermiston business owner, moderated the forum. She had candidates present opening and closing statements and in between asked them questions about important topics of the day. The questions were of her own making.

Val Hoxie, chamber executive director, said she was pleased with the questions, which hit upon important topics in the town: homelessness, internet connectivity, housing and the city’s growth.

Davis vs. Linton

Davis spoke of her experience on the council, having won her seat in 2010. Her priorities, she said, include capital improvement projects, the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, youth activities, the police department and broadband internet service. After seeing the city work for years on solving its homeless problem, she said it must forge partnerships with the county.

She also praised the city for its growth. New infrastructure, she said, was important to encouraging housing development. She said she wants to continue working on these projects.

Linton spoke on her desire to improve veterans’ services, mental health, housing and

job training. Hermiston, she said, faces some difficult days ahead, but it can meet the needs of its residents if it remains committed to caring for people in need. In addition, she said, the town can use four new police officers.

Both candidates spoke of their involvement in the city. Each serves on city boards and volunteers. Linton is a frequent visitor and speaker at city council meetings.

Barron vs. Stradley

A special education teacher, Barron said he is driven to serve others. He was first appointed to his seat in 2018 and won his first election in 2019. He said he has learned much in the last few years. Funding the police and working with Umatilla

County on homelessness are a couple of his priorities, he said. And he stated he wants to see more public and private partnerships, as what is being done currently in Hermiston.

“Hermiston is a town — but one that is transitioning,” he said.

He added it should continue to grow, though it should maintain its small-town feel.

Stradley, former Umatilla County Housing Authority executive director, retired in 2019, said housing is an important issue. We must, he said, draw in developers and work on making affordable housing.

“There are ways to do it,” he said. “I have the experience.”

In addition, he spoke on mental health and drug recovery services.

Spicerkuhn vs. McCarthy

Spicerkuhn was first appointed to the council and then won an uncontested special election in March 2021 to retain his seat. At the forum, he spoke of his community involvement and his work as a lawyer. His background in law, he said, is helpful to the council. Also, he said he is interested in helping small businesses grow in Hermiston.

The incumbent pointed out that Nike is in the Portland area because it started there and grew. The next big Hermiston company, he said, could be one that starts small, becomes successful and expands. For that reason, the city should find ways to help its small businesses.

McCarthy, a past city councilor, spoke of his community involvement and volunteer work. A sales manager for local radio station KOHU, he is someone, he said, who loves his town and wants to see it thrive.

McCarthy spoke of his interest to improve walkability in Hermiston, as well as boosting internet, attracting apartment and house developers, adding new infrastructure and developing the city’s relationship with the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce.

Pendleton finalizes superintendent contract; hires new principal

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton School Board officially made Kevin Headings the next district superintendent at a Monday, April 11, meeting.

The board originally made its announcement on April 2, but members did not approve a contract with Headings until the meeting. Headings, the principal of West Park Elementary School in Hermiston and a former Stanfield School District superintendent, is taking over for Superintendent Chris Fritsch, who is retiring at the end of June.

The district will pay Headings \$162,500 per year for his services. In addition to health, retirement and vacation benefits, Headings will also receive a monthly travel allowance and tuition reimbursements should he decide to return to school.

Headings will start with Pendleton on July 1.

Headings wasn’t the only hire the district made. The board approved the hiring of Angela Lattin to become the Pendleton Early Learning Center’s second-ever principal.

When the district finished turning the old Hawthorne School into the Pendleton Early Learning Center in 2015, Pendleton named Lori Hale as the facility’s first principal. When Hale announced the 2021-22 school year would be her last before retirement, the district turned to a person who had experience leading a school that was partially inspired by the Pendleton

Early Learning Center.

Lattin is the principal of the Baker Early Learning Center, a 2-year-old school that offers a similar focus to its counterpart in Pendleton: kindergarten, Head Start and other organizations dedicated toward early childhood education. Lattin said much of her focus during her time as principal has been on cultivating community partnerships to help round out the Baker center’s services.

“I got to see it from the construction (and) remodel all the way to opening, having kids in-person after going distance learning for a while,” she said. “It’s been a great experience.”

Prior to helping launch the Baker center, Lattin served as a dean of students at Brooklyn Primary School in Baker City. And before getting into administration, Lattin was in the “teaching world,” including stints as a middle school teacher in Vale and for a migrant summer program in Nyssa.

While Lattin has worked in several Eastern Oregon communities over the years,

she said she hopes to make her new job at the Pendleton Early Learning Center the last before retirement. Besides the professional appeal of working there, Lattin said Pendleton is within driving distance of her children.

When the Baker School District was looking into starting its own early learning facility, she was a part of the contingent that stopped in Pendleton to research how early learning schools operated. She said she’s looking to continue the work Hale started.

“Early learning is probably the most important point in our kids’ education,” she said. “I’m excited to be in another center where I can continue what I’m doing.”

Superintendent Fritsch said the district had four qualified candidates to choose from, but the hiring panel was impressed by Lattin’s experience in early learning and how she planned to translate that experience into helping Pendleton.

Like Headings, Lattin’s first day with the district is slated for July 1.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Hermiston sewer upgrades close North First Place

HERMISTON — The first of three major capital improvement projects in Hermiston to upgrade underground utilities, road surface and overall access on North First Place begins the week of Monday, April 18.

Mark Morgan, Hermiston assistant city manager, in a press release reported the road will be closed near the intersection of North First Place and Ridgeway Avenue beginning next week as utility crews bore under the street and nearby railroad

line to tie a gravity sewer line into the existing main. The work and road closure is expected to continue as late as May 31.

The Hermiston Capital Improvement Plan initially called for replacement of the 41-year-old mechanical pump at lift station No. 3, but after further study the city opted to replace it with a gravity sewer main.

“After looking at the costs and benefits of a new pump versus a gravity main, we found that it not only saves upfront costs but will also require less in ongoing maintenance to install the main,” Morgan said in

the press release. “We had initially expected to spend about \$900,000 to replace the pump and motor system, but by tying into the existing lines we’ll get the same benefits for an estimated \$561,924.”

The city reported it slated two other projects to break ground in the next year on North First Place that will improve the infrastructure and significantly impact traffic in the area until late 2023.

Hermiston Capital Improvement Plan projects, timelines, cost estimates and updates are online at www.hermistonprojects.com.

—EO Media Group

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