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## INSIDE 'RENT' TAKES TO THE STAGE AT EOU IN GO!

# Idaho Power gains access for surveys, withdraws lawsuits

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

PENDLETON — Idaho Power Co. has withdrawn all of its lawsuits it filed this winter against Northeastern Oregon landowners seeking access to their property to do surveys related to the proposed Boardman-to-Hemingway transmission line project.

The 516 Ranch Partnership in Union County was the last case. Idaho Power on Tuesday, May 10, according to state court records, filed a notice to dismiss its petition. Five days before that, state court records show Idaho Power withdrew its remaining open case in Umatilla County, when Robert and Colleen Burns reached an agreement to allow the company to access their land.

Attorneys for the company filed the civil petitions between November 2021 and early February. In all, according to state court records, there were 12 cases in Union County, 10 in Baker County, seven in Umatilla County and six in Morrow County.

Idaho Power was asking courts to order the landowners to allow access to their properties for a variety of surveys, including looking for certain plant species and wildlife, including raptors, three-toed woodpeckers and northern goshawks. Sven Berg, an Idaho Power spokesperson, said in most cases the company sought to dismiss the lawsuits because it was able to obtain rights-of-entry out of court from most landowners.

In five cases, however, there were



East Oregonian, File

The setting sun silhouettes transmission lines Feb. 3, 2022, near the future starting point for the 290-mile Boardman to Hemingway transmission line in Boardman.

court hearings, he said. Four of those were in Union County and one in Morrow County.

In two cases, a judge granted Idaho Power a default judgment granting the company access for surveys.

Three others went to trial, Berg said. In two cases the court granted Idaho Power access for surveys.

Idaho Power has been work-

ing since 2007 on the Boardman-to-Hemingway project, a 293-mile, 500-kilovolt line that would run from near Boardman to Hemingway, near Murphy in Owyhee County, Idaho.

Although sections of the proposed route runs through public property — Idaho Power has received permission from the federal government to do so — the line, as proposed, also

would cross several dozen parcels of private land in multiple counties, including Baker, Union, Wallowa and Morrow in Oregon.

Idaho Power would have to pay private landowners for an easement to build the power line across their property. This would be a one-time payment, not an annual lease, according to the boardmantohemingway.com website.

Berg said Idaho Power does not pay for access to private property to do pre-construction surveys.

In each petition filed in court, Idaho Power's attorneys, Timothy Helfrich and Zach Olson of the Yturri Rose firm in Ontario, state either the company or its contractor, Cornerstone Energy Inc. 21, acting on the company's behalf, had contacted landowners several times to request access to survey, test and sample properties.

Because construction on the B2H project is to start as early as 2023, according to the petitions, Idaho Power needs to begin surveying, testing and sampling land in 2022.

Berg said Idaho Power typically sends three letters to each property owner before filing petitions in court.

Most of the dismissals were brief documents, often no more than a couple of paragraphs explaining Idaho Power was voluntarily dismissing the petition and the court was granting the dismissals without imposing costs or attorney fees to any party. A few of the judgements were longer and got into specifics of when and where Idaho Power or its representative could access land.

In the Burns case in Umatilla County, the stipulated general judgment between the landowners and the Idaho Power states the company agrees to provided the Burns with the results of any studies or surveys on the property, which it anticipates delivering in nine to 12 months.

— East Oregonian news editor Phil Wright contributed to this report.

## UMATILLA COUNTY

# Position 1 commissioner candidates address issues, plans

East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — Nine candidates are vying in this election for two seats on the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners.

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.

For Position 2, Commissioner John Shafer is running for reelection against HollyJo Beers and Rick Pullen, both of Pendleton.

The East Oregonian contacted each candidate and asked them to answer the same set of questions and to limit the length of their answers.

1) What is your biographical information, including age, occupation and education? (200 words max)

2) What is your current or past political or public service experience? (200 words max)

3) Homelessness is a significant problem in Umatilla County. If you

are elected, what is your plan to address homelessness in the county? (400 words max)

4.) List and discuss your top three goals if you are to be elected. (500 words max)

The EO edited answers for readability, style, punctuation, grammar and to keep answers within the word limit of each question. Due to space constraints in print, the responses to background and experience are online at [www.eastoregonian.com](http://www.eastoregonian.com). The EO is publishing responses from Position 1 candidates first and will publish responses from Position 2 candidates in the Saturday, May 14, edition along with similar responses from Morrow County commissioner candidates.

Position 1 candidates are in alphabetical order of last names.

### Robert "Bob" Barton, 61, Hermiston, business owner

**If you are elected, what is your plan to address homelessness in the county?**

First, the cause of homelessness in our area must be determined. Is it social, economic, behavioral, a combination of all three? Each of these will need to be handled in a different manner, one solution will not fit all.

Not wanting to recreate the wheel I have researched many cities which have some very viable solutions. It will be interesting to see where our communities and commissioners have developed the solution by the end of this year. God willing, if I make the cut in the primary I will be spending more time with officials to help form a solution.

The current county commissioners have been making necessary changes by bringing in a new provider of mental health and substance abuse services. A byproduct of this is taking some of the demand off of our sheriff's office so



Barton



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

Umatilla County commissioner candidate Susan Bower speaks to the audience during a candidates forum on March 31, 2022, at the Pendleton Convention Center. She is one of six candidates running for the open Position 1 seat on the county board.

they can deal with criminal issues and not mental ones.

I will make a good asset to the team of commissioners with my experience in negotiations, housing options and meeting with legislators to bring funding into Umatilla County.

**List and discuss your top three goals if you are to be elected.**

I have to say from the start of my campaign till now challenges have changed. My No. 1 goal will be to provide services outlined in the new budget. With 7% inflation, the global impact of Russia, shortage in the supply chain and transportation issues we will all be challenged.

**Housing options**

Through collaboration with cities and developers we can build a range of housing options to meet the needs of families and individuals who want to make Umatilla County home. I think we will need to be creative on the permitting process and how or when we charge fees for development. Another place I believe we

need to look is zoning. I have fought for affordable housing in Oregon and know first-hand the rising costs of construction and what it takes to implement the infrastructure needed in our area.

**Economic opportunity**

Small businesses and the men and women who run them are Umatilla County's strength. I will advocate for these leaders and their ability to grow and add family-wage jobs.

I am also an advocate for youth. They are the next generation of residents, and we need to help them become productive members of society. I want to implement programs so that all kids could learn necessary skills and trades not taught in K-12.

**Responsible oversight**

As a business owner and father, I understand what it means to live within our means. I will have respect for taxpayers in all budgeting and management decisions. In my younger years I experienced 18% interest rates and made ends meet. My wife and I survived business in

2008 during the economic crash. Who do you want to represent you through these next challenges?

### Jesse Bonifer, 40, Athena, city councilor and business owner

**If you are elected, what is your plan to address homelessness in the county?**

If elected I would like to form a task force to get to the root of the homeless problem to find out exactly where these folks are coming from and why. I have spoke to several Pendleton police and some of the county sheriff's deputies. Yes, we

do have some local folks who are homeless, but the majority of them have come here from somewhere else and are not locals. Then we may be able to get to the bottom of the problem and come up with some solutions and support for some of these folks.

**List and discuss your top three goals if you are to be elected.**

**No. 1,** to cut the commissioners' pay by a significant amount. We are paying our representatives entirely too much. I would like to save our taxpayers some money.

**No. 2,** I would like to cut non-essential jobs within the county government. There are too many people making money off our taxpayers out there. For the essential jobs that we do need I would like to give those jobs to the individuals in the county rather than building bigger government and asking our taxpayers for more money to support these new jobs.

**No. 3,** I would like to work together with our local governments and citizens of the county to come up with support and solutions for our mental health crisis. It is not the sheriff's duty to take care of our mental health. It was dropped in their lap since all the facilities and funding



Bonifer

