

Fire:

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“Please be smart and careful when enjoying the outdoors to prevent tragic loss,” she said. “Being prepared can mean the difference between life and death.”

In the wake of fires that not only destroyed hundreds of thousands of forest and rangeland, some of Oregon’s recent wildfires, especially in September 2020, left thousands homeless. Brown asked that people stay informed through outlets like oralert.gov on fire activity and evacuation orders.

“If you are asked to evacuate, please just do it,” she said.

Mike Shaw, Oregon Department of Forestry’s fire protection chief, said the cool, wet weather of April and May are welcome respite from the drought and has helped put off fire season, but echoed the governor about the continued threat of wildfire across most of the state.

“We are in a very significant drought pattern, especially on the east slope of the Cascades and vast parts of eastern, southern and central Oregon,” he said.

According to maps predicting the national wildfire outlook, the season will likely ramp up in mid-July and be very active in August. Travis Medema, chief deputy for the state fire marshal’s office, said that is the same time period that competition for resources could be a problem.

“We are going to try and keep fires small and out of communities,” he said.

The state has 305 fire



East Oregonian, File

A firefighting air tanker drops a load of fire retardant into a draw in Harrington Canyon as a large wildfire burned out of control on Aug. 17, 2018, southwest of Pilot Rock. Officials are bracing for an intense wildfire season for 2022 due to a “mega” drought, with worse conditions expected to continue.

departments and three incident command teams.

“We will work with local communities to bolster capacity when needed,” Medema said.

With technology that predicts lightning and detects fuel moisture of grasses, live fuel like trees and dead and down material, Medema said fire crews can be pre-positioned in areas that are likely to have high fire activity.

While state and federal agencies have contracts with air support, the Oregon National Guard will also have two Blackhawk helicopters that can haul 500 gallons of water at a time and one Chinook that can fly with a 1,500-gallon bucket. National Guard troops will be

trained and ready for ground support, as well, according to Maj. Gen. Michael Stencel, the adjutant general of the Oregon National Guard.

Andrew Phelps, director of the Office of Environmental Quality’s focus is on smoke management, air quality and communication, said Deputy Director Leah Feldon.

Tom Roick, DEQ air quality monitoring manager said the network of smoke monitors across Oregon is expanding. He said his department received money to install 20 new monitors. The information will be shared through the state’s air quality index on the OregonAIR app and <https://oregonsmoke.blogspot.com/>.

“As seasons are longer and more intense, the agencies’ roles are keeping people safe,” he said. “We have a shared responsibility to prepare for emergencies.”

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Measures:

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will be discussions at the June board meeting, but not concrete proposals.”

He added the No. 1 concern is school safety and security. The board could conduct opinion polls further to find out what citizens want, Dirksen said, and he trusts his successor Mathew Combe can do what needs to be done.

Measure pass for recreational facilities

The vote for bonds to fund improvements for recreational facilities in Helix and Milton-Freewater received overwhelming support.

Helix Park & Recreation District’s proposal Measure 30-151 is passing 93-57 votes, or 62% to 38%.

Helix Park and Recreation District board member Tom Winn said the results mean a boon for Helix.

“The citizens of Helix said they want a pool, and we’ll give them one,” he said.

The measure would raise \$1 million to design and build a new public pool, splash pad, pump house, improve the bathhouse and exterior restrooms and pay the cost of bond issuance. Helix property owners would pay 37 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. The bond would



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, File

Improvements are coming to the Joe Humbert Family Aquatic Center and other Milton-Freewater recreational facilities. Voters in the primary election Tuesday, May 17, 2022, voted 434-314, or 58% to 42%, in favor of a bond measure to renew a local option tax to fund a number of upgrades.

mature in 21 years or less from the date of issuance.

The board is now working to raise more money and write grants.

Winn also said he was glad to see Milton-Freewater’s measure pass, particularly after the problems the community has had with school funding.

Measure 30-150 in Milton-Freewater is passing 434-314 votes, or 58% to 42%.

The measure would renew a local option tax of \$100,000 a year for five years at a rate of 32 cents per

LOCAL BALLOT MEASURE RESULTS

Morrow County schools bond: failing 1,305-798 votes or 62.1% to 38%.

Helix pool bond: passing 93-57 votes or 62% to 38%.

Milton-Freewater recreational facilities bond: passing 434-314 votes or 58% to 42%.

\$1,000 of assessed value to replace or repair city recreation facilities, according to the “Umatilla County Voters’ Pamphlet,” including the Joe Humbert Family Aquatic Center, Yantis Park Playground equipment and city ballfields.

Milton-Freewater

City Manager Linda Hall expressed gratitude for voters showing trust and confidence in the city.

“We know it’s tough times out there, but they want us to finish their priority list,” she said.

The city plans to begin the projects in fiscal year 2024.

Runoffs:

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She also said she is going to address voter turnout. Umatilla County’s turnout is an unofficial 24.9%, or 11,908 ballots accepted out of 47,922 registered voters. Bower said she wants to get people enthused about local government and the democratic process to push up that turnout in November.

“I’m going to be talking about that a lot,” she said.

Heading into the general election, though, Bower said this is the time to push for changes now on major issues affecting the county and not wait until January 2023. She said she was at Walmart this weekend and visited with people helming a booth for the group Design for Change, which supports homeless veterans. That discussion, she said, prompted her to get involved and find people to work on that matter here.

“I started that yesterday,” she said.

Timmons said as the polls closed the night of May 17, she did not know if she would end up at the bottom of the list or the top. The results, she said, were as surprising to her as anyone else.

“I had no idea, in fact,” she said. “Of course I got texts, I got calls, I heard from relatives from all over. I was like everyone else, I waited for results to come in.”

She credited candidates in both Umatilla County commissioner races as “wonderful people” and for jumping into the election.

And while four candidates who were in the race for Position 1 are done, Timmons said she is jumping back on the campaign trail right off. She said she received a call the morning after the election for a group who wants to meet with her that same night.

“There’s no time for a breather,” she said.

Timmons also said she appreciates the numerous people in the county who took their time to talk with her. And while the race has narrowed to just her and Bower, Timmons said she does not plan to change her campaign strategy — going out, knocking on doors and meeting people face to face.

In the two weeks before the election, she said, that ground game intensified.

“I got invited onto a lot of porches, a lot of good conversations over the fence,” she said. “I just put on my tennis shoes and went door to door.”

She explained she took that approach on the advice of some “seasoned politicians” — she didn’t name who — and it paid off.

Timmons said while campaigning she would end up in conversations with residents who turned out to already know her, and that sent her a strong message.

“This campaign has driven home the fact that I’ve lived here my whole life,” she said.

To that end, she said, she will continue having conversations with residents about who she is.

“I’m a candidate for the people,” she said, “the people of Umatilla County.”

Bower added she wants to talk with Timmons about campaign events that would allow them to discuss issues in depth and also hear from locals. Candidate forums are fine, she said, but those are just a starting point.

Bower said she doesn’t know what kind of format this could take, but she would push to get it going early.

Closing out the field for Position 1 were Bob Barton of Hermiston with 2,033 votes, David Nelson of Pendleton with 1,276 votes, Jesse Bonifer of Athena with 1,257 votes and Alvin Young of Hermiston with 498.

Oregon:

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Bentz easily outdistances challengers

U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz easily outdistanced his Republican challengers for the U.S. House in Oregon’s Second Congressional District.

Bentz has more than 59,000 votes, earning 75.9% of the vote. Challenger Mark Cavener has 14,473 votes and Katherine Gallant is in a distant third place with 3,954 votes.

Bentz, who is from Ontario, was elected to represent Oregon’s 2nd Congressional District in 2020.

Oregon’s 2nd Congressional District includes all or part of 20 counties across northern, eastern, central and southern Oregon.

Tight race in GOP nomination for U.S. senator

Jo Rae Perkins has the

edge in the Republican nomination in the race for Oregon U.S. senator.

Perkins has 32.2% of the vote over Darin Harbick with 30.3%.

Whoever wins faces Democrat Ron Wyden in the general election. Wyden is running away with his party’s nomination, having so far received 89.4% of the vote.

Wenholz has edge in Morrow County commissioner race

Wenholz leads the race for Position 2 on the Morrow County Board of Commissioners 50.6% to 49.2% for Commissioner Melissa Lindsay.

In the race for Position 3 on the Morrow County Board of Commissioners, David Sykes has 50.3%, with

Mike McNamee at 30.8% and Gus Peterson at 18.7%.

— Election results are preliminary and from the Oregon Secretary of State’s elections tracker.

Hermiston:

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she called a “luxury item.” Instead, she said, she wants to meet with local business leaders and see what they are most interested in.

Ward 2 (southwest Hermiston)

Incumbent Roy Barron led challenger Stan Strandley 924-603 votes (60.3% to 39.4%) for Ward 2. An Armand Larive Middle School teacher, Barron was on his way in fending off Strandley, a former executive director of the Umatilla County Housing Authority.

“I feel honored. I feel grateful,” Barron said. “I’m excited to see what the next four years have in store.”

He added there are projects he is happy to continue. Top priorities include items from

the Hermiston 2040 committee, he said, including the oft-discussed aquatic center.

“We really want to make sure that the infrastructure projects that we have going on continue to move forward, that we’re financially stable and being fiscally prudent with our decisions,” he said.

He added he wanted to speak to Strandley and tell him of his respect for him.

“It’s not easy to put your name out there and run a campaign,” Barron said.

Ward 3 (northeast Hermiston)

The four ward positions were up for grabs in the election. Incumbent Jackie Myers, who has been on the council since 1994, was the only councilor who was running unopposed. As such, she said she was not altogether surprised by her lead the morning of May 18. She had 1,273 votes, 99% of the total vote count.

“I am very honored and excited to be elected to serve another four years,” Myers said. “I’ve always tried to be engaged and informed in my work for the citizens of Hermiston.”

She added she intends to continue her hard work to “help move Hermiston into the future in a progressive and thoughtful way.”

Ward 4 (southeast Hermiston)

Challenger David McCarthy, radio station sales manager, was leading the incumbent, Councilor Phillip Spicerkuhn. The vote count at that point was 1,046 to 462. “I’m really surprised,” McCarthy said.

He added the surprise was not over winning, but the margin, which he attributed to his campaign.

“I did a few things (Spicerkuhn) didn’t do,” he said, such as advertise in the

voters’ pamphlet, run radio ads and place signs.

As a city councilor, he said, he intends to make internet connectivity a priority. He added he has spoken with Umatilla County commissioners, who share his hope to improve internet service for residents, and he thinks they can get things done.

Also, he espoused on “low-cost, high-reward, low-risk” projects he said he feels the council also can accomplish.

“We do a lot of big things, and I’m happy about all of the big things that we are doing, like the city hall and the library remodeling and all of those things, and the things we’re doing at the park,” he said.

Still, he added, there are smaller projects that can make a big difference. He said he will be on the lookout for those items, helping people in his community.



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