

Incoming Morrow County Commissioner Wenholz subject of ethics investigation

By **MARCO GRAMACHO**
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — An incoming Morrow County commissioner is the subject of a state ethics investigation.

The Oregon Government Ethics Commission on Aug. 19 voted to investigate Jeff Wenholz for possible violations. Wenholz in the May primary won a slim victory to serve in Position 2 on the Morrow County Board of Commissioners. He takes office for a four-year term in January 2023.

The ethics commission scheduled a public meeting to discuss the finding of cause on Feb. 3.

Jonathan Tallman in March sent the ethics commission a written complaint against Wenholz, chair of the Morrow County Planning Commission, indicating Wenholz may have used his position for financial gain and may have failed to report additional income on his 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 Annual Verified Statements of Economic Interest.

In the complaint, Tallman explained that Wenholz,

besides the commissioner's position, is the vice president of the board of directors for the Umatilla Electric Cooperative, and director of LS Networks (a high-speed business fiber internet company).

The conflict of interest, according to Tallman, lies in that Wenholz failed to disclose he is compensated from UEC and failed to recuse himself from discussion on several land use proposals involving UEC in his role as a Morrow County planning commissioner.

Wenholz denied there is anything to Tallman's claims.

He explained there is no conflict of interest because UEC is a 501(c) organization. This is a designation under the United States Internal Revenue Code that confers tax-exempt status on nonprofit organizations. Specifically, it identifies which nonprofit organizations are exempt from paying federal income tax.

"These accusations have no foundation," Wenholz said.

Tallman also accuses Umatilla Electric Cooperative of working with Amazon to

take his family's land. He and his parents own a coffee shop in Boardman in which they sell their fruits and vegetables.



Wenholz

"Amazon Web Services has moved in right next door and has teamed up with UEC, by using the law of eminent domain, to take my parents' land away from them. They intend to use the land to put in a 230 kilovolt power line to deliver electricity to their business," he said.

According to Tallman, his family offered to work with UEC and Amazon to find a way to compromise and benefit both of them.

"They would rather just take the land for their own personal use," he complained.

Tallman said he remembers that around 1994 he met Wenholz and they used to play basketball together.

"I still consider Jeff a friend of mine, but he thinks he is above all of us," he said.

Wenholz, who lives in Irrigon, has served on the Morrow County Solid Waste Advisory Committee and Morrow County Planning Commission. Additionally, he served on the

Morrow County Umatilla Chemical Depot Citizens Advisory Commission for 11 years.

He has also served for the past five years on the Morrow County Budget Committee, and since 2019, on the Good Shepherd Medical Center Board of Trustees.

He narrowly defeated Melissa Lindsay of Heppner for Position 2 on the Morrow County Board of Commissioners in the May 17 primary election.

Lindsay received 1,287 votes to Wenholz 1,313, with six write-ins, for a total cast of 2,606. Wenholz received 50.4% to Lindsay's 49.4% in the final tally. He received a majority of votes, plus one; the number required to win was 1,304.

The race did not qualify for an automatic recount, despite Wenholz's thin margin of victory, county Clerk Bobbi Childers reported at the time. To qualify requires a difference of just a fifth of 1% of all votes, or about 5.2 in this case, well below Wenholz's 26-vote advantage. That's just under a 1% difference. Childers certified the results on June 8.

CHI ST. ANTHONY HOSPITAL



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

A total of 39 health care technical workers Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2022, at CHI St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton voted for union representation through the Oregon Nurses Association.

Technical health care workers vote to unionize

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Thirty-nine health care technical workers Wednesday, Aug. 23, at CHI St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton voted for union representation through the Oregon Nurses Association.

The association in a press release reported the technical workers identified a wide range of issues in favor of organizing a union, including ensuring safe staffing, providing high quality care for patients and their community and seeking equitable wages. Katie Heath, a radiology technologist at CHI St. Anthony, said the vote was a victory for worker protections and collective bargaining rights, just as the nurses at the hospital do.

"We as health care workers have the power to change our future and have a voice in the workplace," she said in the press release. "We have the power to create the work environment our patients, families and community deserve. We as employees are not numbers and our voices matter. We

showed that today with our union victory. We are health care workers fighting for the well-being of our community and every patient that comes through our doors."

CHI St. Anthony CEO Harry Geller said hospital administration "will continue working together to fulfill our primary concern, providing the highest quality of health care to our patients, while maintaining a pleasant workplace environment for all. Every voice has been heard."



Geller

With a successful vote, members will now move on to electing a bargaining team, circulating surveys to determine key issues to be the focus of bargaining with management and setting bargaining dates to achieve their first contract.

This vote is one of a number of successful new union organizing drives across the state in which ONA has participated, including efforts of health care workers with the St. Charles Health System in Bend, providers in Eugene and nurses at Samaritan North Lincoln City hospital in Lincoln City.

National Weather Service predicts more hot days

By **JOHN TILLMAN**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Another round of excessive heat is on the way to the Pacific Northwest, and much of Eastern Oregon is right in the heart of it.

The National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center on Tuesday, Aug. 23, issued a U.S. Hazards Outlook valid for Aug. 31 to Sept. 6 at noon.

The CPC warned of moderate risk of excessive heat from portions of the Pacific Northwest through the Northern Rockies. It

found slight risk of excessive heat in portions of the Pacific Northwest, Great Basin, Northern Intermountain Region, Central and Northern Rockies and the Northern Plains for Aug. 31 to Sept. 4.

The CPC's models agreed the two-week forecast period starts with a strong mid-level ridge centered over western North America, extending eastward toward the middle of the continent. This is expected to maintain an increased potential for excessive heat over parts of the central and western Lower 48 through the middle of the period.

The NWS in Pendleton on its website reported Northeastern Oregon and nearby areas have at least a 40% chance of excessive heat Aug. 31-Sept. 2, with at least a 20% chance for those highs on Sept. 3 and 4. Long-range models have high temperatures of 95 to 105.

Normal highs for Sept. 1 and 2, Thursday and Friday next week, are 80 to 88 degrees, the NWS website said.

Neighbor 2 Neighbor, 715 S.E. Court Ave., did open up cooling stations earlier this year, Vice Chair Shirley Westfall said.

"What we found out was that most were going to the

casino," she added. "So not much demand here."

Chair Dwight Johnson said Neighbor 2 Neighbor has guidelines for when to open cooling stations.

"When we have sustained triple digit highs, as earlier this summer, then we consider opening up," he reported. "It depends on how many consecutive days over 100 are forecast."

Stepping Stones Alliance, Hermiston, which offers warming stations in winter, is not operational.

"We will begin operations in time for the 2022/23 winter season," SSA said in an email.

PENDLETON'S MOST WANTED

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Pendleton Farmers' Market
Downtown Pendleton
Every Friday, 4-7PM

PCA Creation Station
Pendleton Center for the Arts
September 1st, 11AM-3PM

Jam Night
Pendleton Center for the Arts
September 1st, 7PM

Sweet n' Juicy
40 Taps
September 1st, 7-10PM

Ladies Golf Classic
Wildhorse Resort & Casino
September 2nd - 4th

Get Wild in Pendleton
Downtown Pendleton
September 3rd, 11AM-10PM

Artist Reception: Lisa Jarrett
Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts
September 8th, 5PM

PENDLETON ROUND-UP
Round-Up Grounds & Happy Canyon Arena
September 10th - 17th

Hall of Fame Inductee Banquet
Pendleton Convention Center
September 11th, 12-7PM

Bart Budwig
Great Pacific
September 14th, 7-9PM

Sum People
40 Taps
September 15th, 7-9PM

First Draft Writer's Series
Pendleton Center for the Arts
September 15th, 7-8:30PM

Jacob Jolliff
Pendleton Center for the Arts
September 21st, 3PM

Shop Local, Grow Your Heritage

Community Thrift Shop
138 SE Court Ave.
Tuesday - Saturday
10AM - 4PM

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