

# Sen. Findley fends off criticism for not walking out on gun legislation

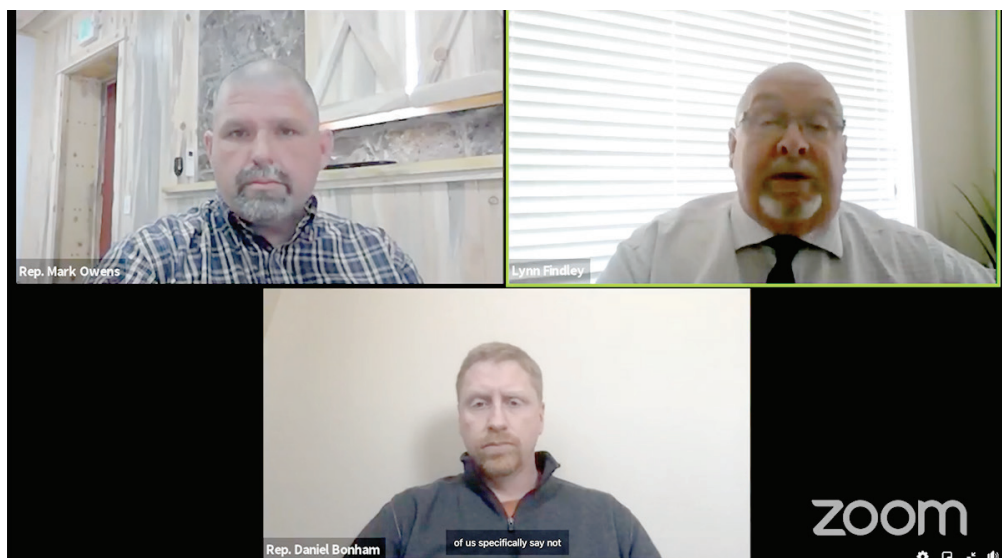
Eastern Oregon leaders say constituents should give feedback to Democrats

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

State Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, batted away criticism during a virtual town hall Wednesday for not walking away from the legislative session last month to block proposed gun legislation that would ban handguns from the Capitol and other state buildings.

Senate Bill 554, approved in a 16-7 vote over the objections of Republicans, would also allow local governments, school districts and universities to set their own rules expanding gun prohibitions.

Findley said he stated many times the specific reasons why he did not walk out. He said SB 554 did not have an emergency clause in the bill, which is a provision that would make it operable right away if signed by Gov. Kate Brown and make it harder for



Clockwise from top left, Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, and Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, during a virtual town hall April 21.

opponents to refer the change to voters.

Additionally, Findley said walking out of the session would not have killed the bill. He said lawmakers are constitutionally required to pass a budget and would have been called back to Salem for a special session, and the first item on the agenda would have been SB 554.

He said the Republicans walked out on recent cap and

trade bills because they had emergency clauses on them. Findley said, during those sessions, the Republicans told the Democrats they would not have walked if they removed the emergency clause.

Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, said the people who oppose gun control legislation had not emailed the Democrats who support those measures. He said the process has been "beyond frustrating."

"They're not making their voice known to the opposition," he said. "I'm getting kicked by the people that want to see more gun laws on the books, and I'm getting kicked by the people that support me and the view that I have."

Findley said House Bill 2510, known as the "safe-storage bill," would require Oregonians to lock their guns when not in use and is "clearly unconstitutional."

The bill would create penalties if guns are not stored properly and require owners to report stolen guns, and help facilitate lawsuits against owners whose improperly stored firearms are stolen and used to cause injuries or property damage.

Findley said HB 2510 was scheduled for a vote on the House floor, but it was canceled.

Owens said the reason for that is Democrats in both the House and the Senate oppose each other's bills. He said they are trying to figure out the next step.

He said Democrats were trying to add an amendment, which would blend the two concepts of SB 554 and HB 2510.

He said they do not know what the end product of the bill will be. Owens said, because the proposed legislation is unconstitutional, it may be struck down by the courts.

"Some of these bills we all consider bad, especially the ones that come at our constitutional rights," Owens said, "but we are in a tough position where we are getting attacked from both sides."

# OTEC to hold annual meeting virtually May 15

Blue Mountain Eagle

Due to ongoing restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative's 2021 annual meeting will be held virtually on Saturday, May 15, at 10:30 a.m.

Three positions on the OTEC board of directors are up for election. Election results for Position 4 (Union County), Position 5 (Baker County) and Position 6 (Grant County) will be announced during the annual meeting. Board President Charlene Chase will conduct business as necessary, and Chief Executive Officer Les Penning will provide an update on the state of the cooperative.

Election ballots have been mailed. Return using the prepaid colored envelope by May 7. Read the instructions on the ballot carefully. Ballots can be dropped off at the secure drop boxes located at local OTEC offices no later than May 14 or at OTEC headquarters in Baker City on May 15 before 10 a.m.

Included with the ballot is a voter's guide with candidate profiles. Candidate profiles and other election details also appear on [otec.coop/annual-meeting-board-elections](http://otec.coop/annual-meeting-board-elections) and will be included in the May issue of Ruralite.

Members voting by mail will be entered to win one of three \$100 energy credits. The winners will be announced during the annual meeting. All member-owners are entitled to vote in the election.

Members can view the annual meeting virtually on May 15 on the homepage of [otec.coop](http://otec.coop) or on OTEC's Facebook page.

Members who do not have access to a computer will be able to call in to listen to the annual meeting. The toll-free call-in number is 1-877-309-2073. The access code is 798-185-293.

For questions on the annual meeting or about the election, call OTEC's communications office at 541-524-2858 or email [communications@otec.coop](mailto:communications@otec.coop).

# City of John Day budgets for assistance from Grant County for Fourth Street repairs

Without \$400,000 from county, city would have to seek a loan to cover 25% match

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

The John Day City Council continues to seek assistance from Grant County to help cover the cost of the Fourth Street repairs.

The city council and budget committee approved the city's budget for fiscal year 2021-2022, which includes anticipating \$400,000 from the county to cover the match cost of a \$1.2 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The budget approved by the budget committee will be published in the Blue Mountain Eagle on May 28 with a notice of a public hearing on June 8, which will be the last hearing for final review and adoption of the budget.

"If the county declines this request, we will need a loan for this amount to complete the project," John Day Manager Nick Green said in the budget message.

The estimated cost to repair Fourth Street, which was damaged by flooding in



Eagle file photo

John Day is seeking county assistance to repair Fourth Street after spring flooding in 2019.

2019, is \$1.6 million, according to FEMA's scope and cost report.

FEMA will cover 75% of the cost with a 25% match required, \$398,281, according to a letter sent to the county from Green on April 1.

Green said, if the county declines to help, the estimated \$400,000 loan for 25 years with 3.5% interest results in a service obligation of \$23,200 annually.

With the debt obligation, Green said the budget will not balance and there will be a deficit in the Street Fund for the upcoming fiscal year of \$11,865.

"We'll have to correct that

deficit through reductions elsewhere," Green said. "The way we got to that deficit and not a larger one is we zeroed out street maintenance. If we have to take out a loan to do the Fourth Street repairs project, we have zero dollars in our street maintenance budget for (fiscal year 2021-2022) and a deficit."

The council's and committee's decision to have the budget account for funds from the county means that if the county does not provide the money, both groups will meet again in July to create a supplemental budget for the loan.

The window for the project to be constructed is July 15 to Aug. 31 this year.

Councilor Paul Smith said the council has gone to the county several times verbally and through emails with no response from the court regarding the Fourth Street repairs.

"The first time we presented the project it was in October during a study session at the airport, and they indicated at that time they were willing to work with us," Green said. "We have not

had any correspondence since then on this subject."

Councilor Shannon Adair said they needed other residents who are not on the city council to talk with the Grant County Court about the project.

"I said this over and over, but Fourth Street serves as an arterial to the Grant County Regional Airport, and I will emphasize 'Grant County,'" Smith said. "We're in this together."

Councilor Elliot Sky said, if there are problems between the city and the county, they need to tell the city so the problem can be addressed and fixed.

"I think they need to be reminded of the water and the fiber that's going into communities that are not ours ... and remind them that the way this community was created in the first place by ranchers and farmers and business owners working together," Green said. "We've moved away from that into this weird, internecine conflict between government agencies that makes no sense at all. Personalities may be a part of the problem, but we need to get over it."

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