

## Budget

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with the \$800,000 budget shortfall since May 2, when Ellison sent an email to the three County Court members and the three citizens who together make up the county's budget committee.

Ellison wrote that she had come across a miscalculation when reviewing budget figures and had substantially reduced the county's reserve funds to offset a significant shortfall.

In an interview on Friday, May 20, Ellison traced the beginnings of the problem to last year's budget cycle, when the committee voted to dip into two reserve accounts that added up to just under \$520,000 in order to plug holes in the budget. This year, she said, the county appeared to be in better financial shape, so the committee voted to liquidate with the hope that the county could use American Rescue Plan Act funds to boost general fund contingency.

But as she was reviewing the numbers in her proposed 2022-23 budget, Ellison said, she realized she had miscalculated. She said she thought the accounting error might have been for ARPA funds, but she was not entirely sure because she did not save the calculator tape.

## Pool

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beginning, and the final outcome seems likely to prompt a hand recount of the vote.

Percy says a difference of one-fifth of one percent can trigger a hand recount. Any difference over that figure requires the parties requesting the recount to cover the cost of recounting the vote.

Voters were asked to weigh in on a \$4 million pool bond that would add 70 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value to property tax bills inside the John Day/Canyon City Parks & Recreation District.

The passage of the bond would allow the district to move forward with the construction of an aquatic center that would be located at the Seventh Street Sports Complex in John Day.

The increased tax would be in effect for the life of the bond, which is expected to be 20 years.

The district includes the cities of John Day and Canyon City as well as some unincorporated areas around both communities. The boundary extends close to Mount Vernon in the west, nearly to Magone Lake in the north, close to Keeney Fork Road in the East and as far south as Starr Ridge.

Voters who live within the parks and rec district were the only individuals eligible to vote on the bond measure.

Plans call for a six-lane, 25-yard outdoor pool to replace 64-year-old Gleason Pool. The design could be altered to enclose the building at a later date.

Gleason Pool has been closed for two years, and



A sign urges voters to approve a \$4 million bond measure to finance a new community pool. The vote ended in a tie in early unofficial results.

workers began demolishing it on Monday, May 23.

The \$4 million bond would be combined with a \$2 million state grant to go toward the pool's estimated \$6 million construction cost. The city has also applied for an additional \$750,000 in grant funding to go toward construction of a warm-water exercise pool at the aquatic center.

An intergovernmental agreement between John Day and the parks and recreation district leaves the district responsible for operating and maintaining the aquatic center while the city would be responsible for covering utility costs

incurred by the center.

The Parks and Recreation District Board voted 4-0 on Feb. 22 to put the bond on the ballot. The vote was held during a joint meeting with John Day's city council. The council approved its own companion resolution by a vote of 6-0 during the Feb. 22 session.

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John Day is little further along in adopting the R3 partnership than Lakeview and Burns. The City Council has reviewed the adopting resolution and has agreed to proceed with the partnership after finalizing the scope with the other two communities.

The timeline for finalizing the partnership is up in the air at this point, however, because John Day City Manager Nick Green is leaving that post in June.

"Depending on what the council decides to do with the replacement city manager, that will determine our ability to participate in R3 because there has to be a city manager to direct the activities of the

agency from each of the three communities," Green said.

A its may 10 meeting, the council appointed Community Development Director Corum Ketchum to the position of interim city manager for a six-month trial period.

Green says there are no known partnerships of this type in the state. R3 would be a precedent-setting agreement between the three communities and an experiment other cities would be closely monitoring to see if it can work.

Brown said the community of Hines has expressed interest in joining the R3 partnership, and the communities of Ontario, Nyssa and Vale have discussed forming a similar partnership sometime in the future.

## Partnership

Continued from Page A1

asset management services that pool staff, capital equipment and financing across multiple jurisdictions, according to the white paper.

In Burns, City Manager Nick Brown says the City Council has had discussions pertaining to R3 but hasn't gotten to a vote on the partnership yet. He adds that the scope of the partnership has been narrowed by the council.

"Burns City Council thinks R3 has a lot of positive attributes, especially shared resources to get projects done that would have been difficult to do alone," Brown said.

Talks about forming a partnership came about during discussions Brown had with John Day City Manger Nick Green about similar goals the two cites have. Those discussions evolved into ideas about sharing a city planner and sharing costs, which led to the idea of the R3 partnership. Both Burns and John Day then reached out to Lakeview to gauge its interest in joining the partnership.

Brown says the agreement "started as an idea about the efficiency of local government." The downside, accord-

ing to Brown, is that the communities in the partnership are so far apart.

Lakeview has put R3 on its list of priorities, according to Town Manager Michelle Perry. The town has been awarded a series of grants to build a water treatment plant and renovate McDonald Park. Because of supply chain issues and rising costs, those projects have taken precedence over the R3 partnership in the town.

"We're starting to clear some of those things off our table, so we'll probably pick up R3 again and do some revisions on that," Perry said.

At this time, she added, Lakeview hasn't had detailed discussions about R3. "We're still in the conceptual part of

development for R3 and what that's going to look like."

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## Rowell wins commissioner race

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
Blue Mountain Eagle

CANYON CITY — Grant County residents

have elected a new county commissioner.

According to updated unofficial results, John Rowell received well over half

of the ballots cast in the May 17 election, garnering over 53% of the vote in the three-way race for county commissioner.

Rowell got 1,348 votes to 809 for Mark Webb, who ran as a write-in, and 362 for Scott Knepper.

If no one had received more than half the total ballots, the top two vote-getters would have faced off in the November general election.

Rowell will take his seat on the Grant County Court in January, joining County Commissioner Jim Hamsher and County Judge Scott Myers.

"It was a nice surprise that folks have that kind of confidence in me," Rowell said.

"Now I've got to go to work."

Rowell, a Marine vet-



Rowell



Knepper



Webb

eran who served in the Vietnam War and the First Gulf War and later retired after a career in the lumber business, is no stranger to public office, having served on the Grant School Board for eight years.

Over the past several months, Rowell, along with outgoing Grant County Commissioner Sam Palmer, has met to discuss the contentious issue of law enforcement funding with Grant County Sheriff Todd McKinley, former John Day City Councilor Gregg Haberly and City Councilor Heather Rookstool.

A mainstay at public meetings of area city councils, the County Court and the Grant School Board, Rowell said he intends to try and understand the issues facing Grant County.

Rowell got into the race with outgoing commissioner Palmer's endorsement.

Palmer, who joined a crowded field of GOP hopefuls in the primary for a chance to unseat Democratic U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, said after the filing deadline that he would not make another run for his seat on the County Court if he fell short of earning the nomination.

**Carpenter reelected**

In other Grant County election news, District Attorney Jim Carpenter, who ran unopposed, was elected to a third four-year term.

Carpenter has held the DA position since 2015, after defeating incumbent Ryan Joslin in the 2014 election.

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