



the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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Getting to know your Morrow County candidates

Ballots go out this week for the May 17 election. Among other decisions voters will have to make are races for Morrow County Commissioner positions two and three. To help with the decision process, the Heppner G-T asked the candidates to tell us a little more about themselves. Here are their answers:

Jeff Wenholz, Candidate for Morrow County Commissioner, Position 2



Jeff Wenholz

What education and/or degrees do you have that qualify you for the position? Four and a half years education at Portland State University majoring in accounting

What, if any, prior experience do you have? Over 20 years volunteering on various county commissions and committees. Over 18 years serving on boards of directors of several not-for-profit and for-profit companies. Over 25 years as self-employed business owner.

Do you have family here? Spouse? Children? Yes, dad John, wife Melanie and her mother.

Why are you running for a county office? I filed for this position when I learned the incumbent was going to not run again. As a longtime Morrow County resident, I want to combine my years of knowledge of issues affecting Morrow County with my years of experience of serving on boards of directors to make Morrow County a great place to live, work and raise a family.

What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing the office you are running for in Morrow County? The biggest challenge I see is the break down in the relationships between county commissioners, county employees and other entities the commissioners work with, such as cities and the port.

How would you address that challenge if you win? I would repair these relationships by listening to people, let them do their jobs without interference, treat them fairly and with the respect they deserve.

Why do you feel you are the best candidate for the job? My years of serving on boards has taught me the role of a board member, how a board is supposed to

-See WENHOLZ/PAGE TWO

Melissa J Lindsay, Candidate for Morrow County Commissioner, Position 2



Melissa J Lindsay

What education and/or degrees do you have that qualify you for the position? Mt Hood Community College, Associates Degree in Social Science San Diego State University; Bachelor's Degree in business administration, finance focus Graduate of Association of Oregon Counties - OSU Extension County College.

What, if any, prior experience do you have? 2016 elected Morrow County Judge, 2017-2022 Morrow County Commissioner, 2022 Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission Appointment to Local Officials Advisory Committee, 2018-2022 Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation Board, 2017-2022 Local Public Safety Coordinating Council - Chair/Vice chair, 2021-2022 Elected Treasurer of the Association of Oregon Counties, 2021-2022 AOC State of Oregon Regional Solutions advisory committee, 2018-2022 Community Counseling Solutions advisory board, 2020 Census Committee, Morrow County Committee Chair, 2013-2016 Morrow County Planning Commission, 2015-present Chair, Morrow County Cultural Coalition, Morrow County School District Budget Committee

Do you have family here? Spouse? Children? I have been married to Todd Lindsay of Lexington for 34 years, we farm and live on a generation farm. We are proud of our two children, a son, Jacob Kenneth who just moved home, graduated from OSU and a daughter Maddie Ryan, a chiropractic student at Western States.

Why are you running for a county office? I have served for nearly six years and believe I still have work to complete on behalf of county citizens. I have been involved, taking in information across the very broad spectrum of areas that a county commissioner serves. I believe I owe it to residents to use that experience to continue and complete a number of projects and initiatives. I have earned the trust of our state and federal delegates, as well as fellow commissioners and judges, who support me in carrying Morrow

-See LINDSAY/PAGE TWO

David Sykes, Candidate for Morrow County Commissioner, Position 3



David Sykes

What education and/or degrees do you have that qualify you for the position? HS diploma and 3.5 years of college where I majored in journalism.

What, if any, prior experience do you have? 10 years as chairman of the Morrow County planning commission. 39 years as a member of the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group. Currently on the County Board of Property Tax Appeals and the Heppner City planning commission.

Do you have family here? Spouse? Children? Wife April lives in Heppner.

Why are you running for a county office? I have owned businesses, raised a family and lived here for the past 42 years. I want to use my experiences and relationships developed in Morrow County to make this a great place to live for ourselves, children and grandchildren.

What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing the office you are running for in Morrow County? Finding and keeping qualified employees for county government. With my business background I have experience in this area.

How would you address that challenge if you win? First I will make sure Morrow County is paying competitive wages and then I will strive to empower department heads and administrators in working with employees so they can thrive and succeed at their jobs, thus providing the taxpayers of Morrow County the best possible services from their government.

Why do you feel you are the best candidate for the job? In my job as a newspaper reporter, I have attended and written articles about many county commission and other county related meetings and activities. I will bring that long-time knowledge with me for use on the very first day on the job.

Any other comments or notes you would like to pass on to the voters: Morrow County has a diversified economy of renewables (wind and solar generating), agriculture and industry, which has given us a high per capita income. This is a good thing, and I will work to keep our economy diversified and providing good jobs and a high quality of life for our citizens.

Gus Peterson, Candidate for Morrow County Commissioner, Position 3



Gus Peterson

What education and/or degrees do you have that qualify you for the position? I have a bachelor's degree in political science from Oregon State University.

What, if any, prior experience do you have? I am not running upon my past experiences or accomplishments, but rather upon the ideas for the future that I have and the commitment I will bring to leading well.

Do you have family here? Spouse? Children? I am the son of Joel Peterson and Lea Mathieu, and a fifth generation farmer in Morrow County. My wife is Sami Peterson.

Why are you running for a county office? I am running for county office because the future of Morrow County matters to me, and I want to play my part in ensuring that the future we share together is one where we all prosper together.

What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing the office you are running for in Morrow County? The biggest challenge currently facing the office of commissioner is a county that is divided and fighting with itself. Pretending that there is no conflict does not resolve it, and there are tensions between the port, the board of commissioners, the north part of the county and the south.

How would you address that challenge if you win? These tensions within the county will not be resolved with vague promises to be respectful. Respect is needed but it goes beyond words. I would address these issues by planning ahead long term with all parties involved in an issue

-See PETERSON/PAGE TWO

County halts Amazon 'gift money' payment to BMCC

Previously approved \$627,518 disbursement put on hold

By David Sykes

With a 2-1 vote the Morrow County Commission last week reversed

itself and put the brakes on a previously authorized \$627,518 payment to Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC). The payment was a part of a disbursement package passed in March by the commissioners dividing up a \$11.5 million windfall recently received by the county from Amazon Inc.

The county had received the unexpected large payment when it was discovered Amazon incorrectly underpaid its taxes last year. An error was made by the Oregon Department of Revenue when valuing new equipment installed at Amazon's data facility near Boardman. Under law the company wasn't required to pay the money to the county, but decided, as a show of a good corporate citizenship, to do so anyway. After receiving the funds, the commission classified the payment not as taxes collected, but as a "gift" which gave them wide latitude on how they could spend the money.

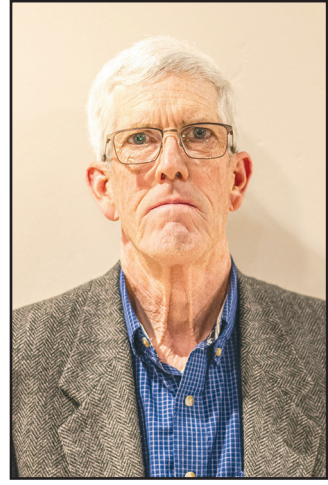
A disbursement plan was developed and passed by the commission March 23 which saw the \$11.5 million go out to every taxing district in the county, however, it was not based on the amount of tax money each district would have received had the Amazon error not been made.

At the time of approving the original disbursement plan, Commissioner Melissa Lindsay was not pleased \$627,518 was going to BMCC saying she wanted to keep all the Amazon money in Morrow County. "I love BMCC. I love the work they are doing, and I know their budget is in trouble," Lindsay said at the March 23 meeting. "However, I don't want to see six hundred thousand dollars going to Pendleton via BMCC." Under the original disbursement plan, BMCC's general fund would have gotten approximately \$468 thousand and its bond payment another \$159 thousand. "I think this was for a county-wide disbursement," Lindsay said of her original understanding of how the county would pay out the Amazon windfall. "My goal is to eliminate those that are not local." She said BMCC was not where she intended for the money to go.

At last week's April 20 meeting Lindsay again brought up the payment to BMCC saying since the March 23 meeting she had heard that BMCC might be scaling back its workforce training program in Morrow County, which prompted her to push for

-See BMCC GIFT/PAGE TWO

Mike McNamee, Candidate for Morrow County Commissioner, Position 3



Mike McNamee

Editor's Note: Responses to the candidate's questions were not received from Candidate Mike McNamee prior to the deadline.

Mike Gorman, Candidate for Morrow County Assessor



Mike Gorman

What, if any, prior experience do you have? 20 years in Assessor's office, 8 1/2 years as Assessor

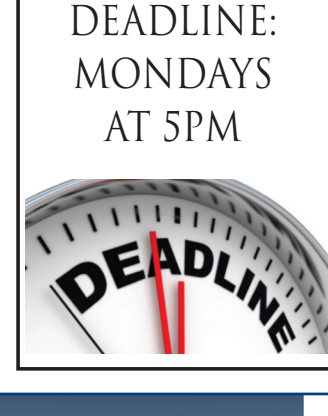
Do you have family here? Spouse? Children? Significant Other

Why are you running for a county office? To continue my public service

What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing the office you are running for in Morrow County? Morrow County's growth

How would you address that challenge if you win? By continuing to work with county and community leaders

Why do you feel you are the best candidate for the job? Knowledge and experience



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