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COUNTY RACE Continued from Page A1

development as the county's most pressing concern and water as the development driver. He said that means working with state water agencies for water rights. Shafer, however, said mental health and drug addiction are the biggest problems. He said Lifeways, which provides local mental health services, needs to make good on old promises of providing nine workers in the county.

Bailor said public health has to be the top issue and suggested the county needs a behavioral health committee to find "home grown solutions." Murdock added housing to the mix and said the county is working with the city of Hermiston on a project to add hundreds of homes. And Pullen said the county needs to hire a full-time economic development director.

That left an opening for Murdock, who on a subsequent answer pointed out the county did what Pullen requested back in February, when former Pendleton Chamber of Commerce director Gail Nelson took the post as the county's new economic development and tourism coordinator.

Pullen admitted that was news to him.

Several candidates said the county should be a companion in economic development and partner with cities and organizations. Givens said the county needs to continue using property

RIM

continued from Page A1

struggling schools.

around the state to gather infor-

mation about the best-perform-

ing schools in the state and how

their practices differ from those at

Legislators' visit to the area

will include listening sessions

with students, a tour of Uma-

tilla Morrow Head Start, a

meeting with the Hermiston

Kiwanis Club, a visit to Mor-

row County School District,

a tour of the Pendleton Tribal

Attendance Pilot Program, a

visit to the Columbia Basin Stu-



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Athena Mayor John Shafer answers a question about the capabilities of the Umatilla County Sheriff's Department during a commissioner forum Wednesday in Hermiston. Shafer is challenging Umatilla County Commissioner Larry Givens, at right.

tax breaks to bring in businesses. Bailor said he sees the county as a "facilitator for economic development" and questioned if the county was getting a good deal from those business incentives.

Murdock and Shafer touted how the jail has boosted the inmate population from about 135 per day to more than 200. But Shafer said that means inmates are sleeping in recreation rooms, and a chunk of the inmate population has mental health problems.

Pullen said mental health has long been a concern and the number of people with mental illness is rising. He said he wants more mental health services in schools. Bailor said county leadership

should have seen the mental health crisis coming sooner and been more aggressive in pursuing state money to address those needs in the jail. The county needs to develop better mental health services, he said.

Murdock said the state cut funding for mental health and has yet to bridge that gap. He advocated for a mental health grant program akin to the state's Justice Reinvestment Program, which funds local programs to keep offenders out of prisons.

He also touted county successes, including the resurrection of the drug treatment court, which closed last year due to a lack of state funding.

Givens said the county is one of the fastest growing in Oregon, and growth brings some pains. Even so, he said, the county is in a good financial position. Pullen asserted the county board of commissioners' first move in a budget crisis is to fire personnel, but that should be the last resort. The board in 2017 cut 10 positions to fix a \$1.7 million shortfall, a move he called poor management.

stated Murdock every employee with the county from the 2017-18 fiscal year will remain in the upcoming fiscal year.

The condition of county roads was also discussed. Givens said road department funds come from the state gas tax, which is declining in revenue, and not the county's general fund.

The county prioritizes which roads to maintain or repair to stretch those dollars, he said.

Shafer argued maintaining roads on a rotational basis, while Bailor said the county should entice companies to take on road work.

Murdock said Umatilla County has more miles of roads than any other county in the state, and with a bond a no-go, the county sets aside money to keep facilities in good condition.

Pullen suggested a program of three years of regular road maintenance, then dedicating the next year to tackling out-of-the-way roads.

dent Homebuilders Program and a dinner with local business

leaders. Next week, from Monday to Friday, on and off ramps between Interstate 82 and Highway 730 near Umatilla will be intermit-

tently closed overnight. According to the **Oregon Department of Transporta**tion, the closures, which will take place between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m., are for pavement work being completed along Highway 730 between Old River Road in Umatilla and Willamette Avenue in McNary. Drivers will be directed by signs to take the next exit instead.

Celebration was in order as athletes, volunteers and fans involved with Hermiston/Pendleton Special Olympics Local Program #510 recognized award winners for the 2017 sports season.

The April 10 event, held at The Arc Building in Hermiston, included the presentation of awards announced by communications manager Kristi Smalley. Those recognized incldued Justin Winter (Male Athlete of the Year), Jennifer Williams (Female Athlete of the Year), Jessica Sexton (Volunteer of the Year), Win**nie Burnett** (Coach of the Year), **Boardman Pool and Recreation** Center (Business of the Year), and Dalton Schneider (Youth Volunteer Award).

Special Olympics provides year-around training and athletic competitions for people of all ages with intellectual disabilities. There is no charge to participate.

The current sports season offers training in track and field, Bocce' and golf. If interested in participating as an athlete or volunteer, call Angela Schneider at 541-314-0166.

You can submit items for our weekly By The Way column by emailing your tips to editor(a) hermistonherald.com or share them on social media using the hashtag #HHBTW.

Seven dems competing to run against Walden

HERMISTON HERALD

Unaffiliated voters will have to wait until November to participate in the race for Oregon's 2nd Congressional District, but Republicans will find two challengers to Rep. Greg Walden's party nomination, while Democrats will be able to choose from a field of seven candidates hoping to challenge Walden in the general election.

Walden, who is running for re-election, has held the seat since 1999. He is being challenged by Randy Pollock and Paul Romero in the Republican party.

On the Democratic side are Eric Burnette (Hood River), Michael Byrne (Parkdale), Jim Crary (Ashland), Jennifer "Jenni" Neahring (Bend), Raz Mason (The Dalles), Jamie McLeod-Skinner (Terrebone) and Tim White (Bend). The seven Democrats presented a united front during a March 23 candidate forum in Pendleton, choosing to take shots at Walden instead of each other, accusing the incumbent of neglecting his district and criticizing him for recent votes on taxes and health care.

"I live a couple of blocks from Greg Walden, and that is in part of why I'm running," Burnette told the audience during the forum.

Crary, a retired attorney and veteran, was the party's nominee to challenge Walden in 2016 and received $2\overline{8}$ percent of the vote that year. He has promised to run on individual donations, not money from corporations and special interests, and said he is focused on campaign finance reform as one of the issues that first inspired him to run.

McLeod-Skinner has been busy on the campaign trail, including a speech at Pendleton's March for Our Lives the day after the candidate forum. She calls herself a "rural Democrat" and believes both political parties need to spend more time paying attention to the rural areas of their districts.



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\$569,500- Gorgeous log home, 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths. Open beams, high vaults, rock fireplace, views. Updates inside/ out. Artesian well, outbuildings. 4 bay garage/ shop. 20 acres fenced. Vicki 541-969-9441 cell. #18130451

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