



CANDIDATE RUNDOWN | CITY COUNCIL



Lori Davis, Ward 1

Who she is: Lori Davis has been a city councilor since 2010. She works for Two Rivers Correctional Institution. She grew up in Hermiston, and said she is running again for the city council because she feels like she still has more to contribute after gaining experience and confidence on the council.



Her vision for Hermiston:

Ten years from now, Davis would like to see Hermiston have a YMCA-type recreation facility with an indoor pool, paid for through a voter-approved taxing district on the west side of Umatilla County, as well as added restaurants and retailers like Target. She would also like to see the city pay more attention to its homeless population, and work on getting increased housing to the area.

Davis said she believes the city moved too fast on taking over ownership of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center (she made a motion to delay the decision, but ultimately voted for it after her motion did not pass) but has also expressed a belief that, given some time, the center will bring in the revenue it needs to operate successfully.

Overall, Davis said the city has been doing a lot of things right, including getting a free public bus system going for residents and providing the right business incentives to bring projects like a major expansion of Lamb Weston's food-processing operation to town.

She wants to help the city continue to stay on the right track.

Mark Gomolski, Ward 1

Who he is: Mark Gomolski is a school board member for the Hermiston School District, a member of the city's Hispanic Advisory Committee and a volunteer with several organizations including Agape House, Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church and the Aspire program at Hermiston High School. He retired to Hermiston from the Chicago area in 2014, where he worked in county government.



His vision for Hermiston: Gomolski believes the city has made several missteps in the last few years and would like to be involved in city decision-making going forward. He cited the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, the new senior center and the city's decision to take over ownership of the Hermiston Community Center from the chamber of commerce as examples where he believes the city council should have done a better job of listening to its constituents, and said he thought the \$1.2 million the city is spending on a festival street downtown could have been better spent elsewhere.

Going forward, he would like the city to hold VenuWork's "feet to the flame" in making EOTEC profitable and search for a new management company if that doesn't happen. Gomolski hopes to see the city do its part to bring in another grocery store to Hermiston, to get new homes built in the area and to get more area students going into trade programs and apprenticeships to help with the contractor shortage.

Jackie Linton, Ward 1

Who she is: Jackie Linton is a substitute teacher for Hermiston School District. She grew up in Hermiston and moved back to the city in May 2012 after retiring from the postal service in Washington then spending some time in Georgia helping a family member. She was recently appointed to the city's budget committee and said she decided to run after attending city council meetings for almost two years.



Her vision for Hermiston: Linton said she worries about community members — particularly retirees — having to choose between paying their tax bill and their grocery bill, and said the community should be aware of that when trying to pass levies and bonds.

She said she believes supporting small businesses is a key to continuing Hermiston's growth. She would also like to see the city support ventures such as a year-round farmer's market combined with a location for food carts to congregate, and would like to see a center where the homeless can pick up mail, receive phone messages and get clothes for job interviews.

On EOTEC, Linton believes the city should give VenuWorks, the venue management company hired to run the center, some time to "dig in and learn the ropes and get to know the people and what they like as far as events" before coming up with some larger events to hold there.

If elected she would like to send out surveys to residents about city issues at least quarterly and hold listening sessions to gather feedback from constituents.

Shean Fitzgerald, Ward 2

Who he is: Shean Fitzgerald moved to Hermiston in 1978 to work in the construction industry and is now retired. He is a Marine Corps veteran who served in Vietnam, is getting involved with veterans' groups in the area and is running for the seat from which his wife Clara Beas Fitzgerald has decided to retire.



His vision for Hermiston: Fitzgerald wants to see the city recruit new industries and new businesses to the area, helping to grow the city's tax base. He said he believes property taxes in Hermiston are too high right now and he doesn't want to see taxes raised on current residents. He said the city also needs to focus on fixing Hermiston's housing shortage.

Fitzgerald said the citizens need to "stand up and put pressure on the city council" to listen to the taxpayers on issues and think for themselves. He said he would love to see 200 people attending council meetings on a regular basis, and would give his cell phone number to any constituent if he were elected.

Homelessness and veterans' issues are close to his heart due to his military service, and Fitzgerald said if there is anything the city can do to create more outreach and mental health services for veterans, he wants to help. He also has ideas for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, including making the center more affordable for rentals, soliciting private donations and starting a flea market there.

Roy Barron, Ward 2

Who he is: Roy Barron has lived in Hermiston for about three years after growing up in Weiser, Idaho and graduating from Xavier University in Ohio with a political science degree in 2015. He was a victim's advocate for the Umatilla County District Attorney's office, a drug and alcohol counselor for drug court until it closed down and is now working with the county's RISE mental health program in schools. He coaches the freshman baseball team at Hermiston High School and is on the city's Hispanic Advisory Committee.



His vision for Hermiston: Barron said he likes what the city has done with its Hispanic Advisory Committee and believes the city's police department treats Latino residents fairly, but he hopes to see outreach and relationships with the city's Hispanic community continue to improve and would like to see more participation in city government from all residents.

He said he is excited about how Hermiston's downtown is looking, particularly with projects such as the new festival street under construction, and believes it is important to invest in the community to continue to bring new projects like the recently-announced Lamb Weston expansion to the area. He wants to see Hermiston continue to grow while managing to keep its "small-town feel."

Barron said he knows he has a lot to learn but is committed to making Hermiston a better place after settling down here and having younger siblings who are in the Hermiston school system.

Jackie Myers, Ward 3

Who she is: Jackie Myers has been a city councilor since 1994 and said she plays a valuable role in being the city council's historian. She is the council's liaison to the Parks and Recreation committee. She graduated from Hermiston High School and is a licensed tax preparer for Severson Accounting & Taxes.



Her vision for Hermiston: Myers said the city has been "pretty forward-thinking" in recent years and is on a good track. She praised the city's decision to join with the county in creating the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, bringing a new asset to the community and opening up a space in the middle of town for the school district to expand, as an example.

She also said she believes that since the parks and recreation department took over the Hermiston Community Center the space has been "well-utilized" to offer new, diverse programming to city residents. She called the Harkenrider Center (home of the new senior center) the future "shining star" of downtown and said she believes that the new festival street being built a block away will become a nice gathering place for the community that can be extended along Second Street in future phases.

Myers said she believes Hermiston has "made great strides in making people feel welcome" and is an inclusive community, something she wants to help continue.

Kyran Miller, Ward 3

Who he is: Kyran Miller moved to Hermiston in 2016 after retiring as director and owner of a funeral home in Midland, Michigan. He is a Vietnam veteran and volunteers a number of places, including Agape House, Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church, the Lions Club and Two Rivers Correctional Institution where he runs a Bible study group.



His vision for Hermiston: Miller wants to see Hermiston grow and become a "destination city" that draws in tourism and new residents through some sort of theme. He said Hermiston's graduation rates could be a barrier to convincing people to move to Hermiston, however. He called the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center an interesting opportunity to draw in tourism and said he likes some of the event ideas — including a BBQ cook-off and horse show — that the new manager has discussed bringing to EOTEC, but also said the city may have been saddled with a financial burden in taking on full ownership of EOTEC.

Miller said he is a "very strong supporter" of the chamber of commerce and didn't think the city should have made the chamber move out of the Hermiston Community Center. He said the city has made many wrong decisions in recent years, and said it feels like when the city council comes to meetings to make a decision they already have their minds made up — something he would like to change by starting monthly listening sessions.

He said he believes the city has done a good job handling its finances and he has been pleased with reports on the city's budget.

Doug Smith, Ward 4

Who he is: Doug Smith was elected to the Hermiston city council in 2015. He grew up in Pendleton and moved to Hermiston after he was hired as an officer by the Hermiston Police Department in 1988. After retiring from the department he now works as a general contractor.



His vision for Hermiston: Smith said while visitors to city council meetings may get the impression that councilors are just accepting whatever recommendations city staff present, the recommendations put together by department heads and the city manager are based on a detailed set of goals that the council creates each year. He said that goal-setting process is one of the best things the city has started doing in recent years and has helped develop ideas such as the festival street.

Smith said one thing he would like to see to aid in Hermiston's economic development is a 500-foot extension of the airport's runway. He said since Hermiston is already known as a transportation hub for shipping goods by road, river and rail it only makes sense to open up more opportunities for moving freight by air too.

He also said as Hermiston's growth continues to add to traffic on Highway 395 and a few other main thoroughfares, the city needs to build new roads that residents can use to navigate around town.

CITY RACE

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council is on the right track there. Linton, who is not currently on the council but has been attending meetings regularly for about two years, described recent changes the council made to zoning, lot coverage rules and other steps to encourage infill development of empty lots scattered around town.

"I think this will help as far as housing is concerned, bringing in more homes with the zoning laws being changed, and making it more accessible for families to buy and purchase and own their own home," she said.

Incumbent Doug Smith (Ward 4) said a next step needed to be addressing the shortage of contractors that makes the housing shortage worse. He referenced Ranch & Home, which hasn't been able to

complete its store on the south end of Hermiston yet due to problems finding electricians.

"In order to actually get those houses built we have to have contractors to be able to come and do it," he said.

Economic Development

The topic of economic development was woven throughout the evening, as candidates discussed the need to bring in new homes, businesses and tourism to the area.

Kyran Miller (Ward 3) said new businesses and homes won't appear until the city has things that make people want to visit and live in Hermiston. He criticized the school district's graduation rate as a drawback to people researching whether they wanted to move to Hermiston. He also said he wants to see the city complete projects that make Hermiston a "city of destination," and praised the creation of the urban

renewal district downtown.

"Again, it has taken forever to get anything done, but we're showing results," he said.

Incumbent Lori Davis said Hermiston growth "is a positive thing but can also be a challenge." She said she would like to see more retail, restaurants and housing available to help attract larger industries. She said that she thinks that projects the city has in the works, from the festival street to a planned new skate park, will help.

Linton said small businesses are the backbone of any city's economy and she wanted to see the city be as supportive as it can to small businesses and residents trying to start a new business, in addition to trying to bring in new business.

"Help them to be able to start a business here in Hermiston," she said. "That will bring in more tax dollars. That will also help to bring in more people, who will buy prop-

erty, buy homes."

Fitzgerald said the city should work to recruit large businesses like Lamb Weston to help Hermiston's economy grow. He also said the community needed to stop putting new taxes like school bonds on the residents before old debts were paid off.

Other thoughts

Economic issues weren't the only ones discussed Wednesday — candidates also shared their goals to help Hermiston's people.

Barron worked as an alcohol and drug counselor for Umatilla County before the drug court closed and now works for the county's mental health program in schools called RISE. He said he is passionate about tackling the city's addiction and mental health problems.

Davis discussed the need for Hermiston to keep up its infrastructure so that residents have good

roads to drive on and the community doesn't start losing assets because they are too far gone to fix.

Smith said Hermiston is his home, and he cares deeply about making it a better place. He recited his personal cell phone number to the audience and said he is open any time, any place to hearing feedback on city issues. Miller said he wanted the city council to start holding monthly forums, but if other councilors weren't willing to participate he would "put up a tent in my front yard" if that's what it took.

Gomolski also touted his commitment to transparency, stating that the city council doesn't do enough to inform residents and hold public hearings on issues before voting on them. He also said that the city needed to "re-invest" in its relationship with the chamber of commerce and do more to support that organization.