

Executive team takes leadership of Umatilla County health

By PHIL WRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

Umatilla County approved a plan to keep someone in charge of its public health department. Actually, two people.

The department's last administrator, Jim Setzer, resigned a month ago, marking the third person to helm the department in five years, according to the county, plus Commissioner George Murdock filled in twice.

The county was not expecting Setzer to depart after a year-and-half in the role, and Murdock said he had no desire to take on interim duties again. He asked health department staff to craft a plan for a more sustainable organizational model. The plan's unveiling came Tuesday during the county board's meeting with staff, and the vote in favor followed Wednesday morning in Pendleton.

Rather than hiring a new administrator, the county set up an executive team consisting of a director and a new deputy director position. The county board appointed Joseph Fiumara as director and Alisha Southwick as deputy director.

Fiumara continues as the boss of the septic inspections and told commissioners he intends to expand the work into Morrow County. He also will supervise the front office staff and work with Southwick, who will oversee multiple department roles, including health education and a new community health supervisor.

The county appointed Amanda Walsborn to take on that role. She was the health department's prevention education specialist. The reorganization added one

equivalent full-time job to public health, caused the need for some back-filling of positions and required an additional \$1,800 from the county's general fund. Even so, Fiumara told commissioners, the plan will "curb the revolving door that we've had at the administration level."

Murdock praised the team for the approach, and he and fellow Commissioner Larry Givens voted in favor. Commissioner Bill Elfering could not attend the meeting.



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