

Voting data shows east-west divide in commissioner race

By **ALEX CASTLE**
STAFF WRITER



Dan Dorran **HollyJo Beers**

Dan Dorran and HollyJo Beers have had a month to evaluate how Umatilla County voted in the May 19 primary, sending the two of them into a runoff for the only opening on the three-person board of commissioners in November.

While neither were necessarily surprised by how the voting broke down throughout the county, both are preparing for a November general election that is primed for a dramatic increase in voter turnout.

“Looking at the total number of people who voted, I’m not sure any of us really drove people to the ballot box,” Dorran said of the May 19 primary.

Dorran, a Hermiston resident and longtime member of the Umatilla County Fair Board, finished first in May after receiving 5,585 total votes, which amounted to about 34% of the 16,505 votes cast in the county.

HollyJo Beers, a Milton-Freewater resident and leader of the Umatilla County Three Percenters,

came in second with 4,025 votes, which was just over 24% of the vote.

However, Umatilla County’s voter turnout of less than 37% in May is destined to increase in November when Americans as a whole are statistically more likely to submit a ballot with the White House up for grabs. In 2016, for reference, Umatilla County’s voter turnout increased from around 45% and 15,000 total votes cast in the primaries to 70% and around 28,000 total votes cast.

While the demographics will undoubtedly change in November, an analysis of May 19 voting data from the county’s 46 precincts, which group voters according to their place of residence, shows an east-west divide among Umatilla County voters.

Dorran received roughly

42.5% of votes cast in communities west of Pendleton compared to Beers’ total of about 17%. And that difference showed up most glaringly inside and outside of Hermiston, where Dorran received more than 1,400 more votes than Beers and won nearly 40% of the vote to Beers’ 15%.

“I really thought they would split the vote over there more than they did,” Beers said, adding that Dorran and the other primary challengers all live in Hermiston and how she’ll be focusing her efforts there moving forward. “Dan’s been over there an awfully long time, but I do want to go over there and give them a choice.”

Though he already seems to have the support of many Hermiston voters, Dorran said his campaign wants to reach more of its residents who didn’t cast a ballot at all in May and will stress the importance of keeping a voice from the county’s west side on the board.

“As you put down your priorities, I think we want to make sure the folks in Hermiston understand that

I am a west-end candidate,” he said.

Outgoing Commissioner Bill Elfering is a Hermiston resident, while Commissioner George Murdock lives in Pendleton and Commissioner John Shafer is the former mayor of Athena.

Beers added that she specifically is hoping to reach out to the county’s Latino and Hispanic voters, many of whom live in Hermiston.

“I think that they’re a vital part of Umatilla County,” she said. “I really need to touch base with them and let them know what I’m about, and find out their needs and what they’d like to see happen.”

In a much tighter competition, Beers edged Dorran by just about 1.5% in Pendleton and communities on the east side of the county, with 2,908 votes to Dorran’s 2,744.

Precinct data shows that Beers’ advantage mostly showed through in Milton-Freewater, where she lives now, and Pilot Rock, where she grew up. Beers finished with about 31.5% of the vote in Milton-Freewater compared with about

23% for Dorran, while she got 40.5% of the vote in Pilot Rock to Dorran’s 24%.

Voters were mostly split between the two candidates in Pendleton, which cast the most ballots of any single city in the county and where Dorran ultimately won with 30% of the vote to 27% for Beers. The city’s individual precincts were closely contested, with Dorran winning six and Beers four. The difference, ultimately, amounted to less than 150 votes between the two candidates.

“We need to get on the streets of Pendleton and answer the questions door to door and face to face,” Dorran said. “The follow-ups that we have had from folks are, ‘Hey, we just don’t know you, Dan.’”

Dorran plans in-person events like town halls beginning in Hermiston sometime in July, he said, and will also be holding events throughout the summer in Helix, Pendleton, Pilot Rock and Milton-Freewater.

Otherwise, he’s primarily been planning out the logistics for the next stretch of the campaign and said he’s

continuing to educate and familiarize himself with the county and its communities by attending public meetings throughout the area.

Beers, on the other hand, has been active by speaking at the “Hermiston Freedom Rally” at the end of May and said she’s working with those organizers to plan an event to support law enforcement in response to the Black Lives Matter protest movement. She’s also held signature-signing events for the latest initiative to recall Gov. Kate Brown and said she’s hoping to hold more in-person events and go knocking door to door to meet voters.

Roughly 1,500 votes and 10% of the total ballots cast separated Dorran and Beers in the primary. But with the field whittled down to two, which leaves the nearly 7,000 votes cast between the three other primary candidates up for grabs, and the voter turnout expected to increase thanks to the presidential election, both are gearing up for a competitive race through the summer and into fall.

Raíces applauds DACA decision

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

A Supreme Court decision blocking President Donald Trump’s attempt to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals was met with approval by a local grassroots organization.

The program, which protects undocumented immigrants from deportation if they were brought to the United States as a child and meet certain requirements, was set up in 2012 by President Barack Obama.

Roy Gomez, a board member for the Hermiston organization Raíces, said the ruling gave him hope for better opportunities for those protected by the pro-

gram, known as “Dreamers,” in the future.

“It’s definitely a small victory for us,” he said. “It’s a battle we won that will keep the momentum for us, but there is still a lot of work to be done for Dreamers.”

Raíces’ stated mission is “creating a space for our community’s voice by empowering Latinx leaders through unity, education and connections.”

The group focuses on encouraging civic engagement, and offers initiatives, such as a DACA scholarship that covers the applications fees for community members reapplying for their DACA status every two years.

Gomez pointed out the

“rigorous” requirements for young people who were brought to the United States as a child to qualify for the reprieve from deportation, including a high school diploma and no felony record. He also said that many DACA recipients in the Hermiston area fill essential jobs.

“These are good people we’re advocating for, people we want in our community,” he said.

Oregon Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden released statements after the ruling urging the Republican majority to allow the Senate to vote on legislation that would give a path to permanent resident status for DACA recipients.

Wyden sets virtual town hall June 25 for residents of Northeastern Oregon

HERMISTON HERALD

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., will hold a live, online town hall meeting for residents of Umatilla, Morrow, Union and Wallowa counties on Thursday, June 25 at 2 p.m.

The town hall will be live streamed on the Town Hall Project Facebook page. Anyone wishing to ask a question can fill out the form provided on the Facebook page. Contact info@townhallproject.com for more information.

Wyden said in a news release that he will be par-



Wyden

ticipating from Washington, D.C., but expects the conversation to be as “robust” as past in-

person town halls. This week’s town hall will be the fifth in a series of six regional, virtual town halls he is holding during the pandemic in partnership with Town Hall Project.

“Hearing directly from Oregonians is always a top priority and that conversation must continue so Ore-

gonians in every part of our state can ask me questions, voice their views and share their priorities about all the challenges facing our state and country,” he said in a statement.

Nathan Williams, executive director of Town Hall Project, said the organization was founded on the idea that in-person town halls are an essential part of democracy, but during the pandemic they “strongly encourage all lawmakers to prioritize the health of their constituents and to suspend indoor in-person gatherings.”

Filing for Hermiston City Council positions is open

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Interested candidates for the Hermiston City Council can file to run for an at-large seat until Aug. 25 at 5 p.m.

Hermiston has four “ward” seats on the council that represent a specific area of the city, and four at-large seats that can come from anywhere in the city. All four of the at large positions are up for election Nov. 3.

Everyone who files will be listed on the ballot, and the top four vote-getters will begin a four-year term on the council on Jan. 1.

The at-large seats are currently held by Manuel Gutierrez, Rod Hardin, Doug Primmer and David McCarthy. McCarthy was sworn in June 8 after being appointed to fill John Kirwan’s seat after

Kirwan resigned. Although no one has turned in filing paperwork, yet, McCarthy told councilors when he was appointed that he plans to run to keep the seat beyond the rest of the year.

Mayor David Drotzmann and Municipal Judge Thomas Creasing will not appear on the November ballot after running unopposed and winning their seats during the May primary.

Election information and applications to file for candidacy can be found online at hermiston.or.us/city-recorder/city-hermiston-elections or at city hall. For more information, contact City Recorder Lilly Alarcon-Strong at 541-667-5004 or lalarcon-strong@hermiston.or.us.

Alarcon-Strong can also be contacted about infor-

mation and applications for city committees. Current positions open include seats on the planning commission, faith based advisory committee and budget committee.

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75th Annual Chief Joseph Days

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The Board of Directors
Chief Joseph Days Rodeo Committee



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