



2020 ELECTION EDITION

HERMISTON CITY COUNCIL

Five candidates discuss city issues at forum

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Ballots for the Nov. 3 election go out Oct. 14, and Hermiston residents got to hear from the five candidates running for four seats on the Hermiston City Council during a candidate forum hosted by the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday, Oct. 6.

Topics ranged from encouraging more citizen participation to spending taxpayer money. Candidates answering questions were incumbents Rod Hardin, Doug Primmer and David McCarthy, and first-time candidates Nancy Peterson and Maria Duron.

Peterson, who is an accessibility specialist for the disability rights office at Columbia Basin College, spoke throughout the night about how she believes her personal experiences, from a past as a single mother to three months of homelessness, will help her represent a wide variety of Hermiston residents.

“As a full time job I work as an accessibility specialist helping college students with disabilities have equal access to their educations, so I spend a lot of time studying laws, making sure that their rights are respected, sometimes doing some creative problem solving, and also making sure that the school’s needs are met as well,” Peterson said. “And if you think about it, that’s a lot of what government is. It’s taking care of the needs of the people, making sure the rules are being followed, and using what resources are available in creative ways, and I’m to that point where I feel like I can offer that to a broader community.”

She said she wants to see



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Candidates for the Hermiston City Council discuss the council’s duty in regard to city projects during a candidate forum at the Hermiston Community Center on Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2020.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Ron Hardin, a candidate for one of four open Hermiston City Council positions, speaks during a candidate forum at the Hermiston Community Center on Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2020. Hardin has been on the City Council for 28 years.

the city ask the school district what it can do to support the schools and see more solutions for affordable housing needs. She said the city needs to “go where the diversity is” in the community and listen to residents from all different backgrounds and social groups.

Duron, the other newcomer to the race, spoke of her past experience as a

Hermiston School Board member and how past jobs have helped her work closely with the city, particularly the Hispanic Advisory Committee. She described herself as a “hardworking Latina” and a “servant leader” who wants to help the city continue to grow. She also said she would like to work on more outreach to Spanish-speaking residents.



Primmer



Peterson



Duron



McCarthy

Duron said Hermiston’s growth comes with many challenges, from infrastructure needs to increased crime, and she wants to see the city study how other communities are handling those problems. She said she wants to encourage more citizen involvement in city council and committee meetings.

“A lot of the time we draw our own conclusions based on what someone else might have said, but I think you have better understanding as to how they arrived at the decision when you get to hear their interaction and all the work that has been done behind the scenes,” she said.

McCarthy, who was appointed to his seat on the

council in June, cited his service to the community in roles such as Kiwanis Club president. He said he is particularly passionate about education, and about expanding access to technology. He said the city needs to start talking about what “going back to normal” looks like after the pandemic.

“One thing that shutdowns have taught us, and distance learning and Zoom meetings and live streaming, have all taught us is that we may have been very ill prepared for this, but we also didn’t ever expect this is something we would have to prepare for,” he said. “We have to examine the effects if something like this were

MORE ANSWERS

For candidates’ answers on how the city should deal with homelessness in the community, see page A12. For a video of the full forum, visit the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce’s YouTube channel.

to come into place again. We have to find ways of making things like that more accessible. We have to find ways of making services more accessible to people.”

When asked what he would do if the city had increased resources, he said he would like to see the city increase visibility and lighting around pedestrian crossings in town.

Doug Primmer, who has served on the council since 2012, said he has a strong sense of justice and of public service developed over a career that has included working for the Department of Corrections, being a rescue diver and a reserve for the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office.

When asked about the future of Hermiston, he said getting more water for agriculture and industry in the area is a key to the city’s future growth. He also said he wants to make sure the city continues to monitor its spending carefully and attract new business growth to make sure it has available funding for future projects.

“That’s the best thing we can do is to keep the money available to us and watching how we spend it,” he said. “As opposed to just throwing money at problems, we look at how problems are solved and the best way to pay for that.”

Rod Hardin, who has

See Council, Page A15

Candidates makes their case for county commissioner

By **ALEX CASTLE**
STAFF WRITER

For the first time this election cycle, candidates for Umatilla County commissioner met in person to make the case to voters this November during a candidate forum at the Hermiston Community Center on Tuesday, Oct. 6.

Long-time county fair board member Dan Dorran, first-place finisher in the May primary, and Three Percenter HollyJo Beers, who finished second, were also joined by Pat Maier, a Hermiston businesswoman who finished third but is running as a write-in candidate.

The candidates offered different perspectives on the county’s response to COVID-19, their priorities for building a stable economy, along with their ability to represent the county’s communities of color.

Beers and Maier each critiqued Umatilla County’s handling of the pandemic and the current commissioners’ decision to follow mandates imposed by Gov. Kate



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Candidates for the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners Pat Maier (from left), HollyJo Beers and Dan Dorran speak at a candidate forum at the Hermiston Community Center on Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2020.

Brown.

“I would have tried harder to help the small businesses and make things a little more open,” said Beers, who held a maskless protest outside the county courthouse in Pendleton in August and

spent the summer working on the most recent failed campaign to recall Brown.

Maier argued that the county’s leadership was “wrong” and failed its Latino and Hispanic populations by not communicating guide-

lines quickly enough in Spanish and “Mexican dialects” or funding agricultural workers to stay home when sick.

While declining to criticize the county directly, Dorran said he would have liked greater commu-

ONLINE

For a video of the full forum, visit youtube.com/watch?v=2tXh-751jAs on the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce’s YouTube channel.

nication and transparency from the beginning of the pandemic, and suggested forming a small economic recovery committee to assist the commissioners in prioritizing next steps of recovery.

All three candidates said the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office and the county’s public safety budget should be protected from any pandemic-necessitated cuts. Dorran also highlighted the need to protect the Umatilla County Public Health Department’s budget.

“If we’re talking immediate shielding, I would protect that to make sure that we flow through these times that we’re in right now and come out on the other end,” Dorran said.

See Commissioner, Page A15

INSIDE

A3 ▶ City council discusses Hermiston Energy Services rate increase

A8 ▶ Second Amendment ordinance on the Nov. 3 ballot

A10 ▶ Statewide candidates a mix of incumbents and newcomers

A11 ▶ Umatilla County commissioners feel blindsided by vote on industrial property