

Meet the new council

Hermiston City Council appoints Phillip Spicerkuhn to fill Ward IV seat after election

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Three new faces will be joining the Hermiston City Council — two who won their seats in the Nov. 3, election and one appointed by the council on Nov. 9.

The 2021 city council will be comprised of newcomers Phillip Spicerkuhn, Nancy Peterson and Maria Duron, along with incumbents Rod Hardin, Doug Primmer, Jackie Myers, Roy Barron and Lori Davis. Mayor David Drotzmann was elected to another term in the May primaries.

Incumbent David McCarthy will not be on the council in January, after coming in fifth in the five-way race for the council's four at-large seats, and then being passed over by the council for appointment to a recently vacated seat representing Ward IV.

During their Monday, Nov. 9, meeting, the city council interviewed Spicerkuhn and McCarthy for an interim appointment to the council seat representing Ward IV that was recently vacated by Doug Smith. Because Smith had more than two years left in his term, a special election will be held in March 2021.

Both McCarthy and Spicerkuhn told the council they intend to run in March, but from December to March, the council chose Spicerkuhn to hold the seat in a 4-1 vote.

"Both of you guys are extremely impressive and it's a really hard decision to make but I hope both of you do run for the special election and I think it's great that both of you will now have council experience as well," Councilor Roy Barron told them.

In his remarks to the council on Monday, Spicerkuhn said he has lived in Hermiston for 10 years now as an adult, but was also born in Hermiston and raised in Eastern Oregon. He is an attorney for Kuhn Law Offices, a past Lions Club president, on the board of directors for the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce and also a board member for Umatilla Morrow Head Start.

He said he brings a passion for serving the com-



A voter places a ballot into a drop box in Hermiston on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020.

Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File



Spicerkuhn

Peterson

Duron

Hardin

Primmer

Barron

Davis

Myers

"I DON'T RULE; I SERVE. I'VE NEVER VIEWED MYSELF IN ANY OTHER MANNER. I'M HERE TO SERVE THE PEOPLE AND I APPRECIATE THEIR TRUST IN ME."

Doug Primmer, Hermiston City Council member

munity, leadership experience and knowledge from his work at Kuhn Law Offices, which provides representation for several small cities in the area.

"I feel that being a member on the city council is the next step in being able to serve the community of Hermiston and being a part of this community, helping guide it moving forward," he said.

Spicerkuhn will be sworn in during the council's Dec. 14 meeting and immediately take his seat that night. Councilors elected in the recent election will also be sworn in on Dec. 14, but their term will not begin until Jan. 1.

On Tuesday, Nov. 3, incumbent Doug Primmer was initially coming in first in five-way race for the council's four at-large

seats, but after the last votes trickled in ended up second with 20.66% of the vote. On election night, Primmer said he took his lead at the time as a sign that people trusted him to represent their interest on the council.

"I don't rule; I serve," he said. "I've never viewed myself in any other manner. I'm here to serve the people and I appreciate their trust in me."

This will be Primmer's third four-year term. He comes to the council from a background in law enforcement, and recently retired from a job with the Department of Corrections.

When the last votes came in, newcomer Maria Duron ended up in first with 20.88% of the vote. Duron, a family engagement specialist for Hermiston School District and former Hermis-

INSIDE
For complete election results, see **Page 10A**

ton School Board member, said Tuesday night, Nov. 3, that she mostly wanted to thank God, her family, and everyone who supported her during her campaign. She described people who helped her launch a "digital campaign" during the pandemic, put up yard signs and printed up flyers for her to hand out.

"It has been an incredible journey for me," she said in a text message.

In third place was another newcomer to the council, Nancy Peterson, with 19.66% of the vote. Notified of the first round of election results, the accessibility specialist for Columbia Basin College said she was thrilled to be doing so well. She said she thought

See Council, Page A10

New CEO settling in at Good Shepherd

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

When Brian Sims, Good Shepherd Health Care System's new CEO, was 10 years old, he spent a lot of nights in the hospital.

It wasn't because he was sick, but because his single mother was a nurse at a small rural hospital in Arkansas, and she got permission to let him sleep there some nights.

As he watched the hospital staff work, from doctors to custodial staff, he wondered if he would have what it took to work in health care.

"I saw how all the folks came to work every single day and gave everything they had, and sometimes left their hearts right on the

floor," he said.

After he left Arkansas he joined the Air Force instead, but Sims said he eventually ended up directing the recruitment of doctors, nurses and other medical professionals for the Air Force, which lent itself to transitioning to hospital administration once he left the service.

In his most recent job as CEO of Lucas County Health Center in Chariton, Iowa, the hospital was recognized nationally as a "Top 20 Critical Access Hospital for Quality" by the National Rural Health Association. Sims said when he went to pick up the award, he met the recruiters that would end up convincing him to visit Good Shepherd and con-

sider applying for position that longtime CEO Dennis Burke was leaving behind.

"I said, 'You know, I could actually see myself here,'" he said of his visit.

Good Shepherd's board named Sims as the health care system's new president and chief executive officer in July, and he took over the role on Oct. 1. He said he has been greatly impressed with what he has seen in his first month, including a recent drive-thru flu shot clinic that resulted in more than 600 vaccinations in just a few hours.

A hospital is just a building, Sims said, and it's the people who make it what it is. He said he feels good about the people Good

Shepherd has in place, and said his philosophy mirrors that of one of his heroes, American Air Force General Curtis LeMay: If you take care of the people, the people will take care of the mission.

Sims said he's still in the listening stages of getting to know the hospital system now, so he doesn't have a list of big changes he's planning to immediately come in and make.

"I'm sure over time some things are going to change, but it will be gradual," he said, calling it an "evolution, not a revolution."

When people visit a hospital or clinic it's often because they're worried or hurting, he



Contributed Photo
Brian Sims took over as CEO at Good Shepherd Health Care System in October.

See Sims, Page A10

INSIDE

A3 ▶ Hermiston Energy Services to raise rates in January

A6 ▶ Friends and family of Graciela Garcia hold a vigil to mark one year since her disappearance

A6 ▶ Dough Cookies opens a storefront in Hermiston

A11 ▶ Dan Dorran wins Umatilla County commissioner seat