

NEWS BRIEFS

Hermiston High School graduate is among Oregon Supreme Court candidates

Umatilla County Circuit Court Judge Dan Hill is seeking a promotion.

Gov. Kate Brown on Sept. 14 announced a list of candidates for vacancies on the Oregon Court of Appeals and the Oregon Supreme Court. Hill made the 28-candidate field.

Hill, presiding judge for the 6th Judicial District, which encompasses Umatilla and Morrow counties, applied for appointment to the open Supreme Court position.

If selected, the Hermiston High School graduate (Class of 1979) will be taking a large step forward in a career that already has included many notable achievements.

In a bio, he stated he sees this as an opportunity to continue his public service, which started in 1987 with the Legislature, U.S. Army, then municipal court and the National Guard and then the circuit court.

He also brought up that community involvement in the Umatilla County Planning Commission and the Blue Mountain Community College Board of Directors.

He stated he believes “advancing to the Supreme Court would allow him to continue public service in a meaningful capacity, able to best promote the rule of law, fairness and equity for all, in these complex times.”

His judicial career includes highlights, such as his 1990 election as the municipal judge for Hermiston and appointment to half-time circuit judge pro tem for Umatilla County. In the appointment, he spent three years hearing civil post-conviction relief cases.

While serving as a judge, he maintained his Hermiston law practice and served

as a city prosecutor and an army judge advocate.

Umatilla County voters elected Hill to the bench in 2004, the winner of a three-way race with the endorsement of his predecessor. Hill is in his third six-year term.

Hill’s military service was a direct commission into the Judge Advocate General’s Corps in September 1987. His service included deployment to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and to Afghanistan. He retired as a brigadier general on May 31, 2020.

Hill is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College (2014), Willamette University College of Law (1986), Oregon State University (1983) and Blue Mountain Community College (1981).

The governor is inviting attorneys and members of the public to comment on the candidates by contacting her general counsel, Dustin Buehler at 503-378-6246 or by email at dustin.e.buehler@oregon.gov.

Former Hermiston city councilor files to rejoin the council

David McCarthy filed to run for one of the Hermiston City Council seats up for election on Sept. 10, becoming the first person to declare their candidacy for the 2022 election.

Hermiston splits their city council between at-large seats, where all candidates run on the same ballot and the top four vote get elected, and ward seats, where candidates run in four separate races based on their residency. In either election, all Hermiston voters get to vote on all the candidates.

A sales manager at KOHU, McCarthy was appointed to a vacant at-large seat in May 2020. His bid for a full term was denied when he placed fifth



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Oregon National Guard Spc. Renay Monohan sanitizes and cleans a procedure room on Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021, in the surgicenter at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande. Monohan is a local to La Grande, and works as a health care medic as her regular job with the U.S. Forest Service. National Guard members have been activated at a number of hospitals in Eastern Oregon following a surge of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations.

in the November election. McCarthy is now running for a seat representing Ward 4, which is held by incumbent Phillip Spicerkuhn.

Filing for the ward seats on the Hermiston City Council and the municipal judgeship opened on Sept. 9 and will close on March 8, 2022. Election Day is on May 17, 2022, and should no candidate receive a majority of the vote, the top two candidates will compete in a Nov. 8, 2022 runoff.

Rennels dies in Two Rivers Correctional Institution

An Oregon Department of Corrections adult in custody, Joshua Quentin Rennels, died Tuesday, Sept. 14. Rennels was incarcerated at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla and died in the infirmary while on hospice care. As with all in-custody deaths, the Oregon State Police have been notified.

Rennels entered DOC

custody on Nov. 7, 2013, from Marion County. His earliest release date was July 29, 2023. Rennels was 46 years old.

The agency is responsible for the care and custody of 12,000 individuals who are incarcerated in 13 institutions across the state.

Crash injures two Round-Up contestants, kills one

A crash Thursday night, Sept. 16, injured two Pendleton Round-Up contestants and killed another.

Oregon State Police reported the crash occurred at about 8:15 p.m. on the eastbound side of Interstate 84 near milepost 193 where a Volkswagen Jetta ran into the rear of a potato truck.

Jate Frost, 20 of Randlett, Utah, was driving the Jetta east with passengers Richard Schleicher, 24, of Stockton, Oklahoma, and Jesse Hopper, 21, of Magnum, Oklahoma. Ediberto Ramirez Carrillo,

31, of Hermiston, was driving the commercial vehicle hauling potatoes.

The Jetta rear ended the truck, and Frost suffered serious injuries. An emergency helicopter flew him to Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, Washington.

Hopper was in the rear seat and also suffered serious injuries. He was transported to Oregon Health & Science University, Portland.

OSP reported Schleicher was in the front passenger seat and suffered fatal injuries.

Carrillo was not injured. All three occupants of the Jetta were contestants at the Pendleton Round-up, according to Oregon State Police.

National Guard activated at several Eastern Oregon Hospitals

National Guard members have arrived at many Eastern Oregon hospitals as the COVID-19 pandemic reaches its apex in recent cases caused by the virulent delta variant.

Saint Alphonsus Medical Center, Baker City, Wallowa Memorial Hospital, Enterprise, and Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande, each have citizen-soldiers on site to help, in addition to the guard members already at Blue Mountain Hospital, John Day.

At least 20 guard members were deployed to assist in operations at hospitals in nonclinical roles. The hospitals moved to fill in gaps with the National Guard soldiers, placing them in positions throughout the hospitals as ancillary support staff. Staff at the overburdened health care centers more than welcomed the added support for roles such as front door screeners, which clinical staff often had filled.

“That helps us be able to

deploy our clinical people back to clinical work,” said Priscilla Lynn, president and chief nursing officer at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City.

Freeing up resources for the health care staff improves efficiency during a time when worker shortages abound across nearly every industry, and when nurses and other clinical staff have been taxed by an unrelenting 18 months of fighting a pandemic.

“All of the entry level positions across our county — it’s difficult to fill those positions, and we’re experiencing that same thing,” Lynn said. “We’ve had staff out, difficult to fill-in positions that are open for a really long time. So having the guard here (means) the staff is getting a little reprieve. The staff is really grateful. We’ve had an exhausted crew.”

Blue Mountain Hospital District in Grant County was one of the first places where the National Guard was activated after Gov. Kate Brown’s emergency order set in motion a surge of nearly 1,500 citizen-soldiers in support of health care workers and hospitals. The first 500 were deployed near the middle of August, while the remaining 1,000 were set to be deployed and activated in the following weeks.

Grande Ronde Hospital welcomed 10 National Guard members on Sept. 13 to help support operations, according to the hospital. Many of the recently activated soldiers were La Grande locals, including National Guard Spc. Pamela Fredrick, a native of Micronesia who recently earned her degree in communications at Eastern Oregon University.

“I’m always ready whenever we get called in,” she said. “We were told beforehand that this might happen.”

—Hermiston Herald and EO Media Group

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David Maccabee, MD, FACS



Marques Johnson, MD

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