

Commissioner: Port of Morrow not ready to choose a new director

President of port board laments unexpected death of Ryan Neal

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

Industrial facilities operate Jan. 11, 2022, at the Port of Morrow near Boardman. After the death of the port's executive director, Ryan Neal, on Jan. 17, the port is operating under an administrative team.

The Port of Morrow is operating under an administrative team in the wake of the recent death of its executive director.

Former port boss Ryan Neal died Jan. 17 at age 40 after suffering a heart attack. Rick Stokoe, president of the port's board of commissioners, said Friday, Feb. 4, the port has no immediate plans to fill the vacancy.

"Ryan was a very smart young man," Stokoe said. "He led the port in a very positive direction, so the

loss that the port has in losing him has been extreme."

Stokoe, who also is the Boardman chief of police, said the loss extends beyond the port; the entire region is suffering for losing a leader who was "very good at what he did."

The commissioner said the passing of Neal has "hit staff" as well as people who benefited from Neal's work in the community.

"He was an important leader," he said of Neal. "He was very involved in education. He cared about educa-

tion for youth, not to mention he was a loving father."

At the port, according to Stokoe, there is an administrative team covering for the absence of an executive director. The team members are experienced, Stokoe said, and have been able to manage.

"Ryan was instrumental in creating a team environment that keeps the rails on. And two of those individuals, senior leaders of the team, have stepped up and they are fully involved until we go through a process (of hiring a new executive director)," Stokoe said.

These two leaders, he said, are Chief Operations Officer Mark Patton and Economic Development Director Lisa Mittelsdorf.

Stokoe recalled the process of hiring Neal. His father, Gary Neal, helmed

the port until he retired in 2018. The port began a search for a replacement that "went on for quite a while," Stokoe said.

"We ended up interviewing several candidates for that position," he said. "And Ryan was one of them that was part of the interview process."

He said Neal "rose to the top" of the candidate list quickly. He had been working for the port in the warehouse, so the port board experience was valued.

"It seemed like a natural progression," Stokoe said of Neal's advancement to the executive director job. "We were familiar with him, and he did extremely well in the interview process."

Stokoe said the port is not ready to begin searching for

Neal's successor.

"It's too early," he said. "Out of respect for Mr. Neal, we're not going to get in a rush. Our administrative team has done an absolutely wonderful job, carrying on, even though they are under a great deal of pressure, obviously, losing their executive director."

He added the port board has not decided on how to move forward just yet. According to

Stokoe, there will be some sort of process to replace Neal, though he does not know what it might look like.

"Ryan was a great guy. It's really tough, because it was so unexpected," Stokoe said. "He was a great leader, a great man and a loving father. He's truly going to be missed."



Neal

U of O asking Hermiston: How do you get your news?

University of Oregon promotes study to understand how people get their news

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

A University of Oregon survey is reaching out to Hermiston residents with questions about their media preferences.

Where do you go to learn of news? What type of information is most important to you? How informed do you feel about things happening in your community? All of these questions, and more, are on the survey, which is part of a larger initiative called Sustainable City Year Program, is available at bit.ly/uosurvey-hermiston.

Andrew DeVigal, professor at the UO School of Journalism and Communication, is one of the people behind the survey. Also, he is the director of the Agora Journalism Center, University of Oregon's forum for the future of local news and

civic health in Oregon and beyond.

"Increasing our knowledge of how information is received and shared in a local information ecosystem would be good for our communities and information providers, such as news organizations and community organizations," DeVigal said.

He said he is teaching a class on how "journalism can authentically start with community first in its coverage of the community." Referred to as "participatory journalism" or "social journalism," DeVigal's work centers on communities.

He described a movement in journalism that has been influential to the work behind the survey. People within journalism, he said, are looking to better understand informational flow. Initiatives, such as the Listening Post Collective and this survey seek to learn how information passes from one person or organization to another.

The survey asks for demographic information,

name and contact information, if a person should want to answer. Ethnicity, home location and how long someone has lived in town also are questions on the survey.

Then, the survey gets into questions about media consumption — websites, social media use, etc. Also, it asks for physical locations, such as a farmers market or a church, where people obtain information.

In learning about how people receive their news, DeVigal said, researchers can discover the best ways to communicate to people. The survey also attempts to discover the information people want to know, which

can be helpful to local politicians, too.

DeVigal said the survey will end by the second or third week of February, and he should have results by the end of March.

Sustainable City Year Program

The program has organized UO classes, such as DeVigal's, to get a deep dive into understanding a particular city. The initiative now is focusing on Hermiston, collaborating with its city government. Information suggesting recommendations will be shared with the city.

The program has focused on other Oregon cities in the

past, but this is the first time it has worked with an Eastern Oregon city, according to Megan Banks, the Sustainable City director.

"We want to span the entire state," Banks said.

Because Hermiston is the city with the largest population in Eastern Oregon, it made sense to select it for study, she said.

Banks complimented the town as forward-thinking and added her program has worked on other Hermiston projects recently. She said those collaborations have been productive.

"We're lucky to be working with Hermiston," she said. "A lot of this comes

down to how the city approaches the partnership, and (Hermiston) has been very welcoming and extremely knowledgeable. I have nothing but good things to say about the city staff and community."

Byron Smith, Hermiston city manager, said he is very happy with Sustainable City. Also, he said he is looking forward to the results of the survey.

"We are looking for ways that people get information so we can be a better source of information," he said.

Banks said UO will be doing more studies in Hermiston in the coming months.

Pulliam brings campaign for governor to Eastern Oregon

Hermiston Herald

Republican candidate for Oregon governor Stan Pulliam, mayor of Sandy, announced Thursday, Feb. 3, the upcoming start of his Main Street Heroes Tour, including stops in Eastern Oregon.

"We're excited to be meeting with Main Street business owners, community leaders and concerned Oregonians at the next few stops of our bus tour," Pulliam said in a press release. "We're going to continue to highlight Main Street heroes, includ-

ing small business owners, veterans, law enforcement and first responders who are truly the backbone of our local communities."



Pulliam

Pulliam is holding two meet-and-greets for the public Feb. 10. The first is at 9 a.m. at the Port of Morrow Riverfront Center, 2 Marine Drive N.E., Boardman. The second is with the Pendleton Roundup Women at 5 p.m. at Roosters Country Kitchen, 1515 Southgate Place, Pendleton, near the Roundup Athletic Club. For that, RSVP lynnevansrww@gmail.com or text 541-310-8582.

in the article. There were four recent deaths. The article was on page A3 of the Hermiston Herald in the February 2 edition.

CORRECTION

Correction: A headline for "COVID-19 claims lives of three more Umatilla County residents" conflicted with information

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