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Candidates question chamber's endorsements

City commission | 2 of 5 sign document vowing support of org's core positions

ALEXANDER DEEDY
Independent Record

The Helena Area Chamber of Commerce announced its endorsements for two city commission seats over the weekend, after interviewing the five candidates and asking for their signatures on a form vowing

support for 10 positions promoted by the organization.

Ed Noonan and Shawn White Wolf both signed the document and were endorsed by the chamber, and Leroy Beeby, Robert Farris-Olsen and Monica Tranel all declined to sign.

The candidates who didn't sign the form said they



Beeby



Noonan



Farris-Olsen



White Wolf



Tranel

commissioner's door was open to them, and this process was more about starting a relationship with future commissioners.

"That was the main point, to open up that dialogue with them," Burwell said.

couldn't support several of the items, didn't believe in the black-or-white approach or object on principle to locking themselves into supporting a

particular position. Chamber President and CEO Cathy Burwell said that in the past, chamber officials haven't always felt every city

More CHAMBER, page 3A

LIFE LESSONS



Tom Ridge photo, *Independent Record*

Firefighter Dave Maslowski crawls through a crowd of Smith Elementary second graders Monday morning during a Fire Prevention Week presentation at the Helena Fire Department Station No.1.

Students learn safety tips as part of Fire Prevention Week

ANGELA BRANDT
Independent Record

Natalia Traynor, a second-grade student at Smith Elementary School, thought the local fire station was "pretty cool."

Her favorite part of the annual Fire Prevention Week presentation was getting to crawl through a hallway filled with smoke. She learned to stay low to the ground during a fire.

Smoke alarms

Advice from Craig Trapp, Fire Marshal for the Helena Police Department, on proper smoke alarm use and maintenance. 4A

Online extra

Follow this story at helena.ir.com to view a gallery of photos from Monday's presentation at the Neill Avenue station.

Monday was the first time she had practiced the fire safety technique "stop, drop and roll."

"It was really good!" Traynor said.

She is one of more than 800 second graders from the Helena area who will participate in the presentation at the Neill Avenue station



Marlee Williams keeps her face covered as she 'stops, drops and rolls' Monday morning.

station this week. The 2015 theme of Fire Prevention Week is "Hear the Beep Where You Sleep - Every Bedroom Needs a Working Smoke Alarm."

Students learned about staying away from matches, checking the batteries in smoke detectors and how to safely exit a burning building.

They also got familiar with a firefighter in turnout gear as a member of the Helena crew crawled around with the kids to quell

any potential fear.

Lou Antonick, deputy fire marshal, said the goal is for the children to share the information with their parents and grandparents. Second grade is a good age for kids to retain the lessons, he said.

"A lot of kids 10 years from now will remember this trip to the fire station," Antonick said.

National Fire Prevention Week is Oct. 4-10.

EH man accused of child sex crimes

ANGELA BRANDT
Independent Record

An East Helena man is accused of trading a teenage girl a cellphone and drugs for sexual relations. Police say he also convinced the girl to send him graphic images and video.

Richard Charles Saari, 32, faces felony charges of sexual abuse of children, attempted sexual abuse of children and aggravated promotion of prostitution. Saari is being held on \$150,000 bond.

Court documents filed Monday allege Saari picked up the 16-year-old girl from high school in order to engage in sexual intercourse with the teen.

"She said she didn't want to have sex but felt like she had

More ABUSE, page 3A

New threat against O'Neill on Internet

ISIS supporter publishes address of Butte native who killed bin Laden

FOR THE INDEPENDENT RECORD

BUTTE - After a British ISIS supporter published the name and address of Navy Seal Rob O'Neill of Butte and made

reference to his family, the Butte-Silver Bow Police Department discussed the potential threat with the FBI last weekend.

O'Neill, who does not now live in Butte, came forward in 2013 as the Seal team member who killed Osama bin Laden in a May 2011 raid in Pakistan.

Last year, as a documentary

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City to sponsor grant application for Pioneer

AL KNAUBER
Independent Record

Helena's City Commission agreed Monday to seek a state grant to help a local business add an anticipated 14 new jobs.

The commission agreed to apply to the Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund on behalf of Pioneer Aerostructures, which manufactures aircraft parts.

If successful, the grant will be used to purchase equipment

for the new employees, Nathan Pawelek, the company's human resources director, said last week.

There was no discussion by the commission on seeking the grant.

Pioneer Aerostructures is led by Tom Hoffman, who owned the Summit Aeronautics Group before he sold the company for an undisclosed amount to the Boeing Co., in December 2010.

The grant application noted the jobs would be created

between October 2015 and March 2017. An additional two part-time jobs will also be created.

Pioneer currently employs 18 people, Pawelek said in an email last week. A workforce of up to 45 is projected at the end of 10 years according to the grant application.

The grant application calls for a match equal to the amount of the grant. The application lists more than \$3.5 million in matching funds - money

primarily spent or allocated for machinery and equipment purchases.

A portion of the application noted wages would range from \$19.69 to \$30.90 per hour.

Sharon Haugen, the city's community development director, said previously that she sees merit in the application and explained it will help promote a good, local business.

There is no financial obligation to the city by sponsoring the grant, she added.

O'Neill

continued from Page 1A

called "The Man Who Killed Osama Bin Laden" was released, O'Neill told the Montana Standard, "Part of why I'm confident my family will be safe is because of being in Butte. I'm good friends with a lot of the local law enforcement and local SWAT team."

Undersheriff George Skulechick said Monday that O'Neill's family in Butte "is aware and is taking proper precautions."

Skulechick said federal authorities told the department over the weekend that the radical Muslim jihadi organization ISIS is apparently looking for a "lone wolf" to carry out an assassination attempt.

ISIS' publication of O'Neill's address on social media was accompanied by a link to a story in the International Business Times in which O'Neill's father, Tom O'Neill of Butte, said he was not concerned that O'Neill going back about his role in the death of Bin Laden could put the family in danger.

"I'll paint a big target on my front door and say come and get us," Tom O'Neill said in the article. "My ex-wife gave birth to a man. We shouldn't be coming in fear."

The Daily Mirror Online reported Monday that it had been "monitoring jihadi chat on social media and has spotted several people linking to a text file containing instructions on how to find" O'Neill.

The paper did not identify the purported British extremist, who called O'Neill a "number one target" and advocated that he be killed immediately.

The Mirror reported that dozens of other extremists have now researched O'Neill's private information, "despite apparent censorship attempts by social media firms and the website which is hosting the information."

O'Neill told the Montana Standard last year that he was openly concerned that he was making Butte or his family a target. "I would say that it is a time to be vigilant and if you see something that's out of place, let somebody know," he said.

"But also keep in mind that there's a lot of other spectacular targets in this country that would be of more interest to a lot of potential threats. Not that it's not real, but if I was really concerned about that, I wouldn't have done this (come forward)," O'Neill, who quit the Seals after 16 years, now works as a motivational speaker.

The anonymous poster slammed him for "traveling around America putting on seminars boasting about killing Sheikh Osama."

Abuse

continued from Page 1A

to do so to compensate him for the phone he had given to her, as well as the drugs she had taken," the documents note.

The girl was living in a Helena group home at the time. The case was brought to the attention of police in August, when the custodian of the girl found the phone and its contents. Investigators found about 200 messages between the teen and Saari, as well as nude photos and sexually explicit video of the girl.

Court documents say Saari began corresponding with the girl when she was 15 years old via Facebook. The two communicated online and via cellphone beginning in May 2014.

Saari continued to text the girl until Aug. 14 when the staff at the group home found the phone, according to investigators. On Sept. 28, police executed a search warrant of Saari's home. Officers found an external hard drive containing "multiple images of various females" and two folders of images of the 16-year-old girl, court documents state.

Helena Area Chamber of Commerce's core positions

The Helena City Commission candidates who earned the Helena Area Chamber of Commerce's endorsement signed a form vowing to support these 10 positions held by the chamber. Find this story at helena.ty.com to see a copy of the form.

1. The chamber supports free enterprise.
2. The chamber will work to ensure that the regulations on business and the taxes and fees collected for services are not excessive or prohibitive to a positive business climate within our communities.
3. The chamber supports economic development initiatives that will make Helena area businesses stronger, healthier and more prosperous.
4. The Helena Area Chamber recognizes and supports the need for reasonable environmental laws and regulations at all levels. The Chamber stresses that there needs to be a well-reasoned and objective balance between the estimated public gain of implementing new environmental requirements and

the real cost to business and society in complying with them.

5. The Helena Area Chamber of Commerce supports efforts to strengthen our community's infrastructure. This will enhance our ability to attract and retain quality businesses. Ultimately, this will lead to improved job opportunities, wages, and quality of life in the Greater Helena area.
6. Recognizing the importance of a quality and economical transportation system is vital to business in the Helena area, whether surface or air. The chamber will support efforts to maintain and improve transportation into, out of, and within the area.
7. The chamber believes in the ability of market forces to set wages and benefit levels. We encourage workers to further job skills to increase value in the workplace and increase their salary levels. We oppose mandated increases to the minimum wage level or the creation of livable wage legislation.
8. The chamber supports tax abatements for local businesses who are

expanding their business or are new to our area whereas that growth will add new higher paying jobs and eventually new tax dollars that support the tax base. Determination of support by the chamber will be made on an individual basis and on the total impact of that business' projected expansion and growth.

9. The chamber supports the building industry, the jobs this industry creates and the housing this industry provides to the Helena area. The chamber supports streamlining governmental review of subdivisions and permitting to enable the private sector to continue to provide safe and affordable workforce housing.
10. The chamber supports using the most efficient and effective means of providing government services. The chamber supports streamlining governmental services, and privatizing services when beneficial and consolidation of government units whenever effective. Government should not have an unfair advantage when providing the same service as a for-profit corporation.

Chamber

continued from Page 1A

"We were definitely not judging them," she added.

The document included pledges to objectively balance environmental regulations with their cost on businesses, ensure taxes and fees are not prohibitive or excessive and oppose mandated increases to minimum wage or the creation of a livable wage legislation.

Burwell said the document was drafted as a way to set a fair and objective measure and leave out partisan politics.

"It wasn't like we chose who to endorse," she said. "They chose if they wanted us to endorse them if they (signed off) on the document."

White Wolf said he felt comfortable signing the document because he has been a longtime chamber member, he understands the issues and he has always been supportive of small business.

Noonan said he couldn't commit to opposing a minimum wage increase, but he agreed with the rest of the points.

"I am running on a main issue that I believe the city should be a proactive partner with small business to help and encourage a diverse market to businesses and

nonprofits," he wrote in an email.

He added that some statements in the document allowed for analysis on a case-by-case basis.

Burwell said the chamber made it clear candidates could make a case if they didn't support some positions. Even without opposing the minimum wage increase, Burwell said the chamber felt Noonan was a strong business supporter.

Beeby said he didn't sign the document on a "matter of principle."

"I'm not going to sign anything for anybody," he said. Some of the points on the document sounded good on paper, Beeby said, but wouldn't work in a real world application.

He added that he's received other endorsements without being required to sign his name, and didn't think he should have to for the chamber.

"I don't think it was correct for them to require me to do that," he said. Farris-Olsen decided not to sign the document because he said he wouldn't commit to opposing a minimum wage and he doesn't think it's OK to "sacrifice our environment for the benefit of businesses."

"The other problem I had with the way they set it up, it is kind of

created a false dichotomy that says you're either for business or against business," Farris-Olsen said.

He said he supports small, locally-owned businesses, but that the city needs to grow in a responsible manner.

Tranel said she didn't sign because she didn't agree with some of the points, such as opposing a minimum wage increase. She said she intended to get back to the chamber with an alternative statement about supporting business, but had been too busy to get around to it as of Monday evening.

"I think the chamber does a really good job of promoting Helena and I support their agenda in large," Tranel said.

Burwell wrote in a column published in the Independent Record Sunday that this was the first time in the organization's history the chamber had endorsed city commission candidates.

The chamber's government affairs committee developed the chamber's top 10 issues that might

go before the city commission and the full board approved the list, Burwell said.

Burwell said the executive board and the two chairs of the government affairs committee sat in on the interviews.

She said the chamber is still in a learning stage, and if officials endorse future candidates they will likely tweak the process.

She added that all of the interviews went well.

"Even the ones that were not endorsed, or didn't want our endorsement, I think we have still started a relationship with them," Burwell said.

Epic rainstorm slams South Carolina; 12 killed

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — People across South Carolina got an object lesson Monday in how you can dodge a hurricane and still get hammered.

Authorities struggled to get water to communities swamped by it, and with waterlogged dams overflowing, bridges collapsing, hundreds of roads inundated and floodwaters rolling down to the coast, the state was anything but done with this disaster.

"This is a Hugo-level event," said Maj. Gen. Robert Livingston, head of the South Carolina National Guard, referring to the September 1989 hurricane that devastated Charleston. "We didn't see this level of erosion in Hugo. ... This water doesn't fool around."

Much-feared Hurricane Joaquin missed the East Coast, but fueled what experts at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration called a "fire hose" of tropical moisture that aimed directly at the state.

A solid week of rainfall has killed at least 10 people in South Carolina and two in North Carolina, and sent about 1,000 to shelters.

About 40,000 have been left without drinkable water.

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For More Information contact Devyn Hunter, NIE Coordinator, 406-496-5598, devyn.hunter@ie.net

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