

Baker City resident finds skinned coyote beside street

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Brian Blomster wondered what caused the neighbor's dog to jump into the bushes beside the street and later attracted his cat's attention. Then he saw what it was. And wished he hadn't. The carcass of a skinned coyote was discarded atop some shrubs beside Hill-

crest Drive just across the street from the home, at 305 Hillcrest, where Blomster has lived for four years. He found the carcass Monday, Feb. 21. "I was freaked out because it looked like a dog," Blomster said. He called the Baker County Dispatch Center. Officer Rand Weaver of the Baker City Police Department arrived around 9:30 a.m.

He said he took the carcass to the Animal Clinic of Baker, where a veterinarian identified the carcass as a coyote, not a domestic dog. Blomster said he's convinced that whoever dumped the carcass did so the previous night. If it had been there on Feb. 20, he's certain he or someone else would have seen it. Blomster said that although he's glad the carcass

wasn't a domestic dog, he still is bothered that someone would toss a dead animal beside a residential street rather than outside town. "It just feels offensive," he said. "Why would you do that?" Blomster and Weaver both said that inside the carcass was a surgical rubber glove and a length of red cord. Weaver figures the person who skinned the

coyote wore gloves while doing so, and used the cord to suspend the carcass while skinning it. Weaver said if police could identify who discarded the carcass, the person could be cited for offensive littering. But he conceded that's extremely unlikely to happen, absent an eyewitness or security camera evidence that identifies at least a vehicle.

Weaver said the state crime lab isn't going to try to extract human DNA from the carcass for what is a misdemeanor offense. Blomster said he understands that it's improbable anyone will be punished. But he's still upset about the incident. "It was extremely creepy," he said. "Why didn't they just leave it out in the wild?"

Pendleton Planning Commission gives OK to 5th cannabis dispensary

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Across several meetings in 2015, residents and elected officials used the Pendleton City Council to debate whether the city should allow legal marijuana sales. There were points during the debate that the council seemed poised to ban the practice outright. Nearly seven years and a couple of successful ballot measures later, the Pendleton Planning Commission approved a conditional use permit for the city's fifth cannabis dispensary with only modest opposition. The application came from Bimalpreet Bath, a Walla Walla resident who owns a small chain of headshops. With the help of Wave Design Group, a Kennewick, Washington, design firm, Bath intends to build a 5,000-square-foot dispensary at 31 SW Nye Ave., east of the Hampton Inn. Macy Griffiths, an architect for Wave Design, explained the building plans and answered the commission's questions about the building's parking lot, dumpster placement and drainage system.



A new cannabis dispensary plans to open at this vacant lot at 31 SW Nye Ave., Pendleton, between the Social Security Administration office and the Hampton Inn. The Pendleton Planning Commission at its meeting Thursday, Feb. 24, 2022, unanimously approved the conditional use permit for the store.

Phil Wright/East Oregonian, File

But those weren't the primary concerns of the two people who spoke against the project at the meeting. Jim Swearingen said he lives near the proposed dispensary. He added the site was too close to school

bus stops and would attract unlicensed residents to the area. He proposed the city adopt a cap to limit the number of new dispensaries that could open in Pendleton. "I'm 100% opposed to this," he said.

Anthony Bowman said he drives in the area frequently and was concerned the increase in traffic would cause more accidents, a trend that could be exacerbated by dispensary customers illegally consuming marijuana before

leaving the premises. Given time to rebut the dispensary's opponents claims, Griffiths said the facility would be well outside the 1,000-foot buffer zones for schools and the design of the property should offer a

clean flow of traffic. "We've covered all our bases as far as the site goes," she said. Commissioner Ryan DeGrofftt said he was sympathetic to Swearingen's complaint about the dispensary's proximity to school bus stops. But he didn't know of a good way to add it into the rules because school bus stops frequently change based on where children live. In response to Swearingen's proposal about a cannabis retailer cap, Hull said the city's rules might provide a natural limit to future growth. The city requires all dispensaries to be in commercial zones and prohibits their location within 1,000 feet of schools, parks and other marijuana businesses. Given all the restrictions and the existence of four other dispensaries, there are only a few other patches of land where they could establish themselves. The commission ultimately unanimously approved Bath's application. While Bath and his associates are free to proceed with the project, opponents could appeal the commission's decision to the city council.

Morrow County ditches dispatch of Boardman Fire Rescue District calls

East Oregonian

BOARDMAN — The Boardman Fire Rescue District in a press release Friday, Feb. 25, announced the Morrow County Sheriff's Office no longer dispatches the district to medical calls. Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack informed Boardman Fire Rescue District Chief Hughes on Feb. 22 about the change, according to the press release, due to a complaint Donna Sherman, the emer-

gency medical services coordinator of the Morrow County Health District, had with the way fire district's personnel provided medical treatment to a patient. However, according to the press release, neither Matlack nor Sherman have been willing to provide sufficient details for the fire district to investigate the complaint. Boardman Fire Rescue District reported that since March 16, 2020, it has responded to 630 fire

calls and an additional 814 EMS calls. The fire district requires all full-time firefighters to be state licensed emergency medical technicians or higher and provides 24/7 service from the Boardman fire station, according to the press release, with assistance from volunteer firefighters/emergency medical technicians. "The Boardman Fire Rescue District has set and maintained a minimum response time of 90 seconds or less for staff to be

en route to emergency calls, from the Boardman station," the release stated. "This allows the fire district to provide the highest level of care and assistance to the community in times of emergency or crisis." Neither the Morrow County Sheriff's Office nor the Morrow County Health District manage the fire district. Instead, an elected board of directors oversees the district. "The Boardman Fire Rescue District is diligently trying to work out

the issues at hand in order to continue to provide the best emergency medical care when seconds matter,"

according to the press release. "Public safety and patient care is our highest priority."

\$22.7 million in upgrades coming to McNary Dam

Hermiston Herald

UMATILLA — McNary Lock and Dam on the Columbia River near Umatilla is in line for almost \$23 million in improvements. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District, in a press release announced it has allocated approximately \$55 million for area dams. The federal Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act, which was signed into law in November 2021, provides funding for the projects. The act allocated approximately \$17 billion in funding for Corps' infrastructure projects for fiscal years 2022-24. Among the 2022 projects in the plan is \$22.7 million for work on McNary Lock and Dam, including replacing downstream gate gudgeon anchors, spillway hoists and gates, the acquisition and installation of a second der-



East Oregonian, File

McNary Lock and Dam on the Columbia River near Umatilla is in line for upgrades totaling \$22.7 million in 2022 thanks to the federal Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act.

rick crane, dredging and surveys, rehabilitating levee drainage pump stations, upgrades to Hood Park's septic system and reconstruction of Third Street's road at the lock and dam. There are additional projects at waterways in the region. The McNary project, however, is the largest of all the listed projects.

"This funding will allow us to complete critical projects the District has been striving to fund for several years," said Alan Feistner, Walla Walla District's deputy district engineer. "When completed, these funds will have helped us lower the risk of infrastructure failure and flooding, protect the environment, and improve efficien-

cies to serve the public. This is a great benefit for our communities and the Nation." Additional funding from the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act be made available to the Walla Walla District in fiscal years 2023 and 2024.

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