

ELGIN

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“We like the deputies we had and we appreciate the job they did, but it is time to move on,” Hallgarth said.

The mayor added she believes Eckstein will do well with the budgeting work needed to start a new police department. She credits Eckstein with being good at things like landing grants for the city.

Union County Sheriff Cody Bowen said that while his deputies are unable to cite people on charges of violating city ordinances because they are with a county agency, the deputies can often enforce such violations indirectly since in many cases people violating ordinances also are breaking state laws. He noted that underage youths riding motorcycles in town without a helmet, mirrors and signal lights are also violating state laws that can be enforced by deputies.

Bowen said that over the past two years his office has received just two complaints about people riding motorcycles or ATVs in Elgin that are in violation of the city’s code.

He said one of the instances in which county deputies cannot enforce city ordinances via state laws is when the issue involves animal control. He said because Elgin has an animal control ordinance, deputies cannot enforce the county’s ordinance.

“A city ordinance trumps a county ordinance,” Bowen said.

This means that when a dog is at large, the city of Elgin’s ordinance officer must handle



Dick Mason/The Observer

Morris Capers, a Union County Sheriff’s deputy, makes a call on his radio on Friday, May 20, 2022, while on patrol in Elgin.

the case. Dog bites are the only animal control issues sheriff’s deputies can handle in Elgin, Bowen said. He noted though that previously when the city of Elgin did not have an ordinance officer for two months, arrangements were made for the deputies to assist with enforcing Elgin’s animal control ordinance.

A one-year freeze

The contract set to expire at the end of June is a one-year \$343,000 pact. This is the same as what Elgin paid for enhanced law enforcement services in 2020-21. Bowen said he agreed to the freeze to help Elgin with budget

issues it was experiencing in part because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bowen said the contract the sheriff’s office offered this spring was a three-year pact that would charge Elgin about \$348,000 in 2022-23, \$358,000 in 2023-24 and \$368,000 in 2024-25.

Elgin would again receive 420 hours of enhanced law enforcement services each month under the terms of the contract if the city council changed direction and decided to renew its contract with the Union County Sheriff’s Office.

Bowen said there are many months when Elgin receives more than the 420 hours it pays for. He

said that in April Elgin received 500 hours of service and in March it received 499 hours. The extra hours were needed to allow deputies to finish and follow up on criminal cases.

“When the 420-hour mark is reached they don’t just stop. They have to keep on and close cases,” said Bowen, who noted that his department will have to lay off three deputies if the Elgin contract is not renewed.

The sheriff said overtime has to be paid to deputies when they work extra hours, money that comes out of the UCSO budget rather than being passed on to the city of Elgin. He noted that when

Elgin starts its own police department, it will be responsible for paying police officers’ overtime.

The sheriff’s concerns

This is one reason Bowen believes that if Elgin does create its own police department, it would end up paying considerably more for law enforcement than it does now. He said start-up costs including the purchase of vehicles, uniforms and equipment plus annual liability insurance and dispatch center fees would also balloon the city’s law enforcement budget.

Finding people willing to serve as officers is another hurdle the city of Elgin would face.

“Nobody wants to get into law enforcement now,” Bowen said.

He believes it will be difficult to recruit people certified to work in law enforcement or individuals now working in the field who would be willing to come to Union County.

Bowen noted that one county in Eastern Oregon is so desperate to find deputies that it is offering \$10,000 hiring bonuses but is still having a difficult time getting applicants.

The sheriff also said another drawback Elgin would face if it starts its own police department is that it will no longer receive the same level of help from the Union County Sheriff’s Office.

“It will have to shoulder everything,” Bowen said.

Not surprisingly, the sheriff does not believe the Elgin City Council is making a wise decision.

“I do not think that it will be in the best interest of Elgin,” Bowen said.

FALBO

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Falbo said the benefits of playing chess are many, and it can be a family activity with parents bringing children to the club and everyone plays.

“We like to play the adults against the kids to teach them a little bit, and the kids can teach us a little bit,” he said.

Falbo also said the game teaches young players to follow rules and gives them a jumpstart into math and geometry through the visual anticipation of planning moves many steps ahead.

The club is designed more to teach the game than high-level play, but that doesn’t mean opportunities don’t occasionally present themselves.

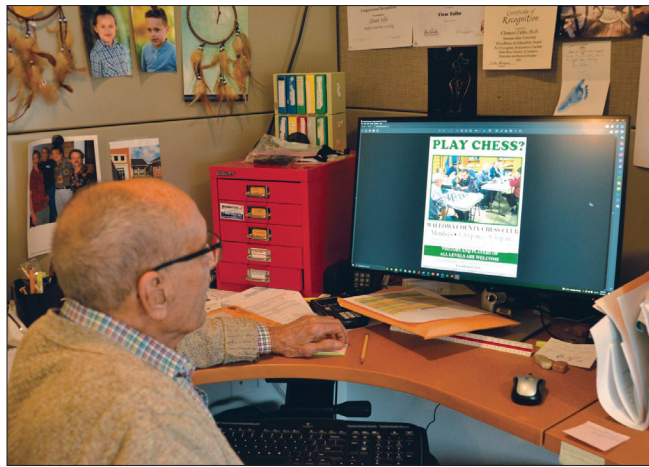
WANT TO PLAY?

The Wallowa County Chess Club meets Mondays from 3:30-5:30 p.m. at the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture. All are welcome. For more information, call Clem Falbo at 541-263-1415.

“We had a grandmaster stop by one night and he played us all and beat us,” Falbo said.

Falbo played in enough tournaments over the years to earn a 1,600 or “B” rating, making him an above-average player. Grandmasters are rated 2,500 or above.

The Netflix series “The Queen’s Gambit” became a nationwide sensation when it was released in 2020 and sparked renewed interest in the game. For those wondering, Falbo favors the London System as his



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Clem Falbo of Joseph on Tuesday, May 3, 2022, shows a poster he is creating to help revive a local chess club. The club, Eastern Oregon’s oldest club, had been going since 2011 until it went on hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

opening when playing the white chess pieces.

“Chess just needs publicity,” said Falbo, who called the series the best representation of chess he has seen on screen.

Locally, he hopes to continue adding members to the club and is trying to put together tournaments and learning events to bring the game to more youth.

Math and chess

Falbo learned chess from his grandfather at 12, but he developed the finer points of the game during his time in the Navy during the Korean War.

He earned a PhD in mathematics from the University of Texas, Austin, and has written numerous books on mathematics.

He also continues to write published papers on mathematics, the most recent was in 2021 in a British journal.

It is continued work in the field that keeps driving him daily even after being diagnosed with prostate cancer two years ago.

He taught mathematics — specializing in differential equations — in California at Fresno State University and Sonoma State University, the

latter stop for 35 years. He retired in 1999 and began working with his wife, Jean — also a chess player — in the U.S. Peace Corps teaching math in the African nation of Zimbabwe before coming to Joseph.

His love of mathematics translates to the chessboard and feeds his mind that has always hungered to find answers to tough questions.

“It is a thinking game and with every move you have to try to think of every possible outcome of that move,” he said. “I play positional chess and that appealed to me because what it amounted to was pattern identification. It is kind of like weather prediction because when you get a certain pattern you can predict things.”

KEOL

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the efforts to convert the radio station space into a fully functioning podcast studio. According to Cimon, the studio will be ready to use by the fall term at the latest — the pending ship date for the audio interface could have the space ready for recording by this summer.

“We’re most of the way there, but have some stuff that is back ordered,” he said. “We’re hoping that comes in the next month or so and then expect to get it up and running.”

Along with Cimon, equipment system specialist Davon Dunajski is assisting in renovating the podcast studio. Dunajski has a background in live recording, modern equipment and the tools necessary in streamlining the project. Cimon and Dunajski have worked together in developing the procedures that will be uti-



Davis Carbaugh/The Observer

Equipment in the Eastern Oregon University podcast studio in the Hoke Union building stands at the ready on Friday, May 13, 2022.

lized once the podcast studio is up and running.

Cimon noted that the priority is to have a studio for students interested in broadcast media production to use. He stated that the hope is making resources available will grow interest in podcasting among students, clubs, faculty and staff at the university.

Students will be able to record their podcasts and leave the space with their recording on file. Those involved with the transition from radio station to

podcast studio are hoping to establish a cost-efficient venue that will allow students and faculty to have a voice in the community and sharpen their media production skills.

“The main overhead with the radio station was FCC licensing,” Cimon said. “There are obviously depreciating assets involved with the podcast studio, but because we’re not broadcasting the podcasts over FM airwaves, it’s quite a bit more affordable to produce content.”

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Grande Ronde Hospital & Clinics proudly welcomes Maurine Robbins, NP — Urgent Care



“I started volunteering in nursing homes at 8 years old and have kept a hand in medicine ever since—I was even a certified Pharmacy technician. I became a Registered Nurse in 2015 before earning my Master of Science in Family Nurse Practitioner from Union University in Tennessee in 2019.

I owned my own wedding and event planning business for 6 years and was the wedding planner for the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville for a year. I also worked with the Tennessee Titans (NFL) when Covid first hit.

We have a son in Michigan at college, and a daughter who will attend La Grande High School. She plays multiple musical instruments.

My husband and I fell in love with Oregon last year. So much so, we eloped to Cannon Beach last October. We love the outdoors...kayaking, hiking, exploring new areas. I am very excited to be here...

it already feels like home!”

Please help us welcome Maureen and her Family to our Community!!

GRH Urgent Care



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