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GIRLS BASKETBALL/1B

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EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2013 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

Pentagon balks on Depot transfer

Reuse authority project manager says Army may have to sell land itself

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

The Columbia Development Authority got some unwelcome news at its first meeting of the new year when project manager Don Chance told them the Army isn't so

sure it wants to give up the Umatilla Chemical Depot land for free anymore.

He said he got the call from the Pentagon shortly before Christmas.

"It was a pretty significant reversal from what we had been told up until last month,"

he said.

The authority, formerly known as the Umatilla Army Depot Reuse Authority, has been working for years on an Economic Development Conveyance application with an understanding that the Army would transfer 9,000-plus

acres at no cost to the authority for a wildlife preserve, agricultural use and industrial development.

Chance said the people he has been working with directly said they understand the authority's situation and still support the no-cost con-

veyance, but higher up at the Department of Defense the situation "has changed."

"They're being pressured to squeeze every dollar out of base closures," Chance said.

He said in the department's view they're expending a significant amount of money to remove asbestos-laced buildings on the property and are wondering why they should

give such a valuable asset away without any money in return.

But Chance said he told the Army if it stood firm on wanting to make a profit it was probably going to have to sell the land off piece by piece in a public sale.

"I said, I'm not trying to

See **DEPOT/8A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Come heron or high water

A great blue heron looks out at the rushing waters of the Umatilla River from a small rock bar in the channel Monday in Pendleton.

PILOT ROCK

Police chief steps down

Richman leaving after 6 years, offers to help with transition

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Darren Richman is retiring as Pilot Rock chief of police and going into business for himself installing garage doors.

"It will be a big change," Richman said Monday morning, "but I'm excited."

At "just over 50" years old, he said he is young enough to leave police work and start a new endeavor. Richman began his police career as an officer in Milton-Freewater in 1996. He has worked as Pilot Rock's police chief since May 1, 2008.

Richman said he talked with Pat Doherty, who used to have a garage door business in Pilot Rock. Richman said he sees a need for the service and thinks it will work out. He also said his wife, Julie Van Epps-Richman, who works for Oregon State Police in Pendleton, is on board with his move from public servant to private businessperson.

Richman submitted his resignation Dec. 29, 2014. His official last day in police uniform is Jan. 30, Richman said, but he would be willing to stay on to assist the city during a transition to a new chief. But that is a call for the city council, he said.

The Pilot Rock City Council will take up the matter when it meets Tuesday at 6 p.m. at the council chambers, Pilot Rock Mayor Virginian Carnes praised Richman and called his departure a significant loss to the community. She also said keeping Richman on through a transition to a new chief would be ideal, and that notion would be part of the discussion.

Carnes also said the city council could opt to contract with retired Milton-Freewater police chief Gary David to act as a consultant for recruiting a new chief. David was a consultant for Pilot Rock when it hired Richman, and Carnes said David was a boon during that process.

Pilot Rock has a three-person police department, but only the chief and officer Glen Diehl have been on duty to cover the city of 1,500 people. Carnes said the third officer, Greg Stallings, has had some medical issues and could return part-time this month.

The shortage at times has meant costly police overtime, and Richman last year had to cancel a vacation. Carnes said those issues also could figure into why Richman is taking off the badge.

See **CHIEF/8A**

HERMISTON

Mom burns hand saving kids from fire

Damages to apartment estimated at \$12,500

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

A fire late Saturday night at Ridgeway Village Apartments in Hermiston sent a single mother to the hospital with burns on her hand and foot.

Tabatha Bursell said her two children, ages seven and five, were in bed with her that night but escaped unharmed.

"We were all sleeping because we had been sick. We were just getting over the flu," she said. "I woke up and there were flames over our head."

The fire had begun to burn a

foam pad laying on the bed near her son and daughter, she said, and she realized she would be hard-pressed to grab both of the sleeping children and pull them away quickly without causing the flaming material to shift onto them. So she picked up the burning foam and threw it in the bathtub, burning herself in the process.

"I did what I had to do," she said.

In pain from the burns, she pulled the kids outside and knocked on a neighbor's door and asked them to call 9-1-1. She said she tried to go back in to get her purse but saw it wasn't safe to enter the bedroom again.

Hermiston fire marshal Tom Bohm said the fire started at or

"We're slowly going through things. We're kind of taking it one day at a time."

— **Tabatha Bursell**

near an extension cord through an arc or short. The damages are estimated at \$12,500.

Chief Scott Stanton said the department was able to limit the blaze to the bedroom, where it started around 11 p.m.

"We got it knocked down pretty quickly," he said.

Sixteen personnel responded with an engine and ladder truck for the second-story fire, and Stanton said Hermiston Police Department "really helped us and helped evacuate the rest of the apartments."

Bursell said she and the kids are staying with her parents, who are helping her change her bandages regularly and watch the kids. She said she hasn't felt up to visiting the apartment, but her parents have and they said her dresser, bed, all of her clothes and most of the rest of the items in her bedroom are unsalvageable.

The children's clothes and beds in the next room are so saturated with smoke that Bursell said they haven't been able to

See **FIRE/8A**



EO file photo

A white cloud of natural gas vents from the Williams Northwest Pipeline liquefied natural gas plant on March 31, 2014 after an explosion ruptured one of the facility's storage tanks near Plymouth, Wash.

Repairs ongoing at natural gas plant

Still no cause determined in last year's explosion

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Federal investigators still aren't sure what caused last year's explosion that injured five workers at a liquefied natural gas plant in Plymouth, Washington, though repairs are underway to bring the facility back to full operation.

Williams Northwest Pipeline, which owns the plant, is spending \$69 million to repair damages on site, including a large storage tank punctured by shrapnel in the explosion short-

ly before 8:20 a.m. on March 31, 2014.

Natural gas from the damaged tank was emptied and transferred into a second undamaged tank, where it remains available for customers during peak wintertime demand. Michele Swaner, a spokeswoman for Williams Northwest based in Salt Lake City, said the damaged tank should be fixed by April and full operations resumed at the plant by November.

See **GAS/8A**



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