

UMATILLA

Port, city nearing resolution on zoning

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
East Oregonian

The port and city of Umatilla have reached an agreement in principle to resolve their year-old zoning dispute. Unless they haven't.

Port Manager Kim Puzey said there is an agreement in principle, though certain "legal, jurisdictional and contractual implications" still require additional refinement before inking a final settlement.

Until then, neither side is willing to discuss terms or negotiations. Officials recently met with a moderator behind closed doors, and made enough progress to postpone a hearing that was scheduled for Dec. 23 before the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals.

The port commission met Tuesday afternoon, and Puzey issued a statement

saying they are still addressing issues "related to indemnification, past actions and future implications." He did not provide further comment.

The conflict centers on a piece of port property west of Bud Draper Road, adjacent to the Big River Golf Course. City maps show the land is zoned industrial and the port planned to build a \$1.5 million freight warehouse on the site.

But the city maintains the zoning designation reflected on its own comprehensive plan map — the one that hangs on display in City Hall — was the result of an error more than 10 years ago, and the property was always planned for residential development.

The city planning commission denied a site plan application for the warehouse, which was upheld by the city council upon appeal. The port then appealed to LUBA in Salem, before sides agreed to

a series of meetings moderated by Joe Franell of Eastern Oregon Telecom.

Franell attended the port meeting Tuesday, and said both sides have been easy and good to work with. City Manager Bob Ward is also optimistic a deal will get done soon, though he expects one more meeting later this month to iron out the details.

"Just the fact that everyone is singing off the same sheet is cause for celebration," Ward said.

The city previously offered for the port to file for a plan zone amendment on the property, which would have brought the issue back before city councilors. The port rejected that option, insisting the city must acknowledge its official maps.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4547.

Scholarships available during FAFSA fairs

East Oregonian

Area students will have an opportunity to win a \$500 scholarship and gift certificates to local businesses during a pair of scholarship and FAFSA events this weekend.

Sponsored by Eastern Promise, trained volunteers will assist students in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form during events in Milton-Freewater and Stanfield. Students will receive assistance in filling out the FAFSA form, as well as making plans to earn college credits while still in high school through Eastern Promise. College credits through the program cost \$10 per credit.

The event for Mac-Hi and Weston-McEwen students is Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at McLoughlin High School, 120 S. Main St., Milton-Freewater. For Stanfield and Echo students, the event is Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Stanfield Secondary School, 1120 N. Main St.

Trained volunteers recently assisted 25 percent of all seniors from Boardman's Riverside High School and Irigon High School in completing FAFSA forms during an event held Jan. 3 in Boardman.

Irigon High School student Von Groves and Riverside High School students Alisha Sorensen and Aristotle Rockwell each won \$500 scholarships at the FAFSA Fair in Boardman. In addition, Darin Hauner, Erica Goodwin and Alisha Sorensen all won gift certificates.

Eastern Promise is growing a college-going culture and increasing access to affordable college credits in high school for all students. For more information about the program, visit www.eastern-promise.org.

For questions regarding the Scholarship and FAFSA Fairs, contact Eastern Promise K-12 Director Kris Mulvihill at kmulvihill@eu.edu or 541-571-5705.



Photo courtesy of Oregon State Police

Crash leaked oil into creek

Sometime early Monday morning, a vehicle crashed off Interstate 84 about 10 miles east of Arlington, nearly ending up in Willow Creek. About 10 a.m., believed to be hours after the vehicle crashed, Oregon State Police located a 1997 Chevrolet Blazer submerged in the waters off the westbound lanes.

No one was inside the vehicle, but oil and gas was leaking into the creek and a roughly 300-foot slick had formed atop the water.

Emergency and environmental cleanup crews were on scene for approximately seven hours investigating the crash and cleaning up the spill. The driver is unknown, but it is believed the person walked away from the crash before emergency personnel arrived.

PENDLETON

School could start before Round-Up in 2015

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

This summer could be among the shortest ever for students and teachers in the Pendleton School District.

At a special meeting Tuesday, Superintendent Jon Peterson said the Pendleton School Board will decide next week whether to start the next school year on Aug. 31, almost two weeks before Round-Up. This school year ends on June 16, about 10 weeks before class would start again.

Students would get nine days of instruction before receiving a week-long break for Round-Up. The rest of the school year would proceed with the usual holidays and breaks before ending June 8.

Seventy-five percent of the participants in the district's calendar survey preferred starting school before Round-Up.

The survey comes several years after the district delayed the first day of school until after the rodeo. If the district

maintained the current calendar, the 2015-2016 school year wouldn't start until Sept. 21.

Dave Fishel of the Wenaha Group was on hand to discuss one of the other significant ongoing changes to the district — the projects related to the \$55 million capital improvement plan.

Fishel said designs for new Washington and Sherwood Heights elementary schools were "95 to 99 percent" completed. He said contractors plan to break ground on Washington in March and Sherwood Heights in April.

As construction gears up, Fishel said Wenaha will hold another slew of public meetings for neighborhoods surrounding the schools. Fishel said he's also interested in setting up opportunities to explain the process to school staff and students.

While crews get ready to start work on two major projects, Fishel delivered a progress report on another centerpiece of the bond that's

already ongoing.

Fishel said the Pendleton Early Learning Center, formerly known as Hawthorne School, is still on-budget and on-schedule and may have just avoided a large obstacle to keeping it that way. At a meeting last month, Fishel said workers found a 20,000-gallon tank buried on the center's campus. Given the tank's proximity to the structure, extracting it would have been costly and time-consuming.

Since that meeting, Wenaha discussed the issue with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, which

decided to allow the tank to remain in the ground if crews clean it properly.

Security upgrades at Pendleton High School and Sunridge Middle School also went off without a hitch, with contractors installing a gate for the high school and a staging area for the middle school.

The next flurry of activity financed by the bond will come in the summer. That includes security cameras and a key card system for the high school, air conditioning for Sunridge and a new telephone and intercom system for the entire school district.

STUDENT OF THE WEEK

Stacy Fitzpatrick

NIXYAAWII HIGH SCHOOL

Stacy Fitzpatrick is a sophomore, three sport athlete in volleyball, basketball and softball. She applies herself to her studies and has maintained all A's throughout this year. She is a natural peer mentor who connects with students in a helpful and friendly manner. She has only missed a half day of school all year, and that was to take her drivers test. Nixyaawii is happy to have Stacy as a student athlete.

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Residents encouraged to test for radon gas

East Oregonian

Most Eastern Oregon residents are eligible for free radon test kits from the state in recognition of National Radon Action Month.

Radon is an invisible, odorless radioactive gas that can rise from the ground and become trapped in buildings. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates it is responsible for 20,000 lung cancer deaths a year in the United States.

According to the Oregon Radon Program, the risk of having dangerous levels of radon in a Pendleton home is a five on a scale of 10. The program tested 28 locations in Round-Up City. Seven locations in Hermiston have been tested, resulting in a risk rating of four

out of 10. Other Umatilla County and Morrow County cities have been tested in fewer than five buildings and have not been given a score.

In an effort to get a better understanding of the radon potential across the state, Oregon's Radon Program is offering a free radon test kit to residents whose homes are in ZIP codes with fewer than 20 radon test results.

Pendleton residents, who are not eligible, can still purchase the kits for between \$15 and \$25 at a hardware store. If dangerous levels of radon are found in a building, the owner is advised to hire a contractor to mitigate the problem.

For more information, or to order a test kit, visit healthoregon.org/radon or call 971-673-0440.

BRIEFLY

Open house Jan. 8 on city charter

HERMISTON — Hermiston residents curious about the city's proposed charter are invited to an informational open house Thursday, Jan. 8 at 6:30 p.m. in the Hermiston Conference Center board room.

The charter, similar to a constitution, lays out the city's form of government. After 50 years without a major revision, the city council has been working to update the charter and put those updates in front of voters during the May election.

Many of the revisions merely modernize the charter's wording and close legal loopholes, but two major changes are being considered. The new charter, if adopted, would change the mayor's term from two years to four years and would change the municipal judge from an elected position to one appointed by the city council.

The city is looking for feedback on the provisions before submitting the final ballot measure.

New AA group meets in Pendleton

PENDLETON — A new meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous will gather weekly in Pendleton.

The meeting is Thursdays from 5:15-6:15 p.m. at St. Anthony Hospital, 2801 St.

Anthony Way, Pendleton. The group meets in the conference room near the cafeteria.

AA is a fellowship of men and women whose primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. For more information, visit www.aa.org.

Local bird club plans potluck

PENDLETON — Raptor recovery and education programs at Blue Mountain Wildlife is the topic of a presentation for the Pendleton Bird Club.

The public is invited to the meeting, which starts with a potluck Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at the First Christian Church, 215 N. Main St., Pendleton. Those attending are asked to bring food to share, as well as their own table service (plates, silverware, cups, serving utensils). Coffee will be provided.

For more information, contact pendletonbirdclub@gmail.com or visit www.pendletonbirders.org.

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

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