

**PILOT ROCK**

# Search begins for new police chief

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

The city of Pilot Rock is putting together a contract for Darren Richman to continue working as police chief while the city finds his replacement.

City staff will also prepare a contract for Gary David, former Milton-Freewater police chief, to act as a consultant in that search.

Richman has been Pilot Rock's top cop since May 2008. He turned in his resignation Dec. 29 and his last day on the job is Jan. 30. He said he wants to retire and start a garage door installation business.

David was the consultant the city contracted during its last search for a police chief, which resulted in the city hiring Richman. The city paid David \$4,300 for his efforts and expenses.

Pilot Rock City Council met Tuesday night and accepted Richman's resignation, then discussed the matter further in a closed-door executive session. Afterward, the council directed city recorder Teri Porter to prepare the contracts. The council also plans to

meet in private Friday and again Wednesday, Jan. 14, for contract discussions.

The Pilot Rock Police Department consists of a chief and two officers, but one man has been out on medical leave. Richman during the public meeting told the council that officer Greg Stallings is willing to return to work two or three days a week starting next week. But because Stallings lives in Milton-Freewater, it could be spendy if he has to work on an on-call basis. Richman said the city would have to pay for the travel time in that case.

The council also gave Richman the approval to set up interviews with two officer candidates.

And council also held off on making a decision on a \$750,000 cash offer from the communications firm Unison to use ground space around two cell phone towers for 50 years. The city receives \$1,097 a month from U.S. Cellular for one tower on a 30-year lease and receives \$3,389 a month on a 25-year lease from American Tower. Those deals also include rent raises every five years, as well as additional revenue if the companies

add attachments to the antennas.

City public works director Steve Draper said the city did not need the fast injection of funds, and the Unison buyout would result in a net loss of about \$380,000 over the 22 years remaining on the existing leases.

Pilot Rock resident John Taylor urged Draper and the council to look hard at the numbers before making any decision and was concerned Unison was low-balling the city. The council decided the city needed to consult two bankers to go over the Unison proposal in order to get a better idea of what is in the city's best interest.

And Michael Baleztena resigned from the council. He was absent. Councilwoman Kacie Moss read his resignation, which stated he was too busy with youth sports to attend. Councilmembers and staff remarked he had missed multiple meetings and failed to notify the mayor or council president before the absences per the city charter. The council accepted Baleztena's resignation.

Contact Phil Wright at [pwright@eastoregonian.com](mailto:pwright@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0833.

# Commissioners, farmers to meet over proposed transmission line

By GEORGE PAVEN  
East Oregonian

Umatilla County commissioners will meet with local farmers to discuss their concerns over a proposed 300-mile transmission line from Boardman to southwest Idaho.

The Boardman to Hemingway project would cross through five Eastern Oregon counties — Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Baker and Malheur — en route to a substation just southwest of Boise. Growers worry the project could take millions of dollars worth of high-value agricultural land out of production, depending on where exactly the line is located.

Federal agencies, led by the Bureau of Land Management, recently unveiled a draft Environmental Impact Statement for Boardman to Hemingway, examining the impacts of their proposed route and a number of alternative alignments. Idaho Power Company has proposed the 500-kilovolt line to increase flexibility and share electricity between the two regions.

Officials with the BLM hosted informational open houses Monday in Boardman, Tuesday in Pendleton and Wednesday in La Grande to provide more information about the proposal and environmental report. The public has until March 19 to comment.

BLM representatives also attended Wednesday's meeting of the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners to answer questions about the permitting process moving forward. The commissioners decided to organize a work session with farmers that will inform comments to be submitted on behalf of the county.

The work session is planned for 6 p.m. Feb. 17. The location is still to be determined.

Planning Director Tamra Mabbott said at least 50 landowners will be invited directly to the session, though others are welcome to attend.

"My idea for this public meeting is to get all these folks in the same room to talk with their elected officials," Mabbott said. "If there's a way the county can put some comments together to further their plight, then that's the purpose of this meeting."

Farmers are not opposed to the transmission project, Mabbott said, but want to make sure the line is configured in a way that will not interrupt their production of high-value crops.

Once a transmission tower is built on or near an irrigated circle, the power company is granted an easement through the land which can make farming difficult or impossible on at least a portion of the acreage.

One 14-mile stretch of line is causing particular stress in Morrow County. A variation of the route would build towers on the east side of Bombing Range Road, which runs along irrigated circles owned by Hale Companies and three other operations.

Craig Reeder, with Hale Farms and the Northeast Oregon Water Association, said they want to see those towers built on the west side of the road in order to spare their farmland. Project manager Todd Adams, with Idaho Power, said that will take a compromise with the U.S. Navy, which owns the bombing range.

County Commissioner George Murdock said the federal agencies are placing higher priority on protecting environmental resources — such as habitat for endangered Washington ground squirrels — over the well-being of farmers and ranchers. He said once that farmland is lost, it can't be replaced.

"The position of the commission is this agricultural land is absolutely vital to the future of the county," Murdock said. "We'll take whatever position we need to protect that resource."

Idaho Power hopes to have state and federal permitting completed by 2018, with the line up and running by 2020. Work is estimated to cost between \$880-\$940 million.

Mabbott said the county's role in collaborating with farmers is at least an attempt to try and influence the process.

"When the agencies site this project, it will have lots of long-term impact," she said. "So we have to get this right."

In Morrow County, Planning Director Carla McLane said the local Military Airspace Advisory Committee continues to discuss Boardman to Hemingway at its regular meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 15 at the Port of Morrow Riverfront Center, 2 Marine Drive in Boardman.

Contact George Paven at [gplaven@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplaven@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4547.

**HERMISTON**

# Cabin Fever heats up with three performances

By TAMMY MALGESINI  
East Oregonian

When John Wambeke launched the first Cabin Fever concert in 2007, he had no idea it would still be going strong seven years later.

"We just had so much fun, we said let's do it again ... and again and again," Wambeke said with a laugh.

In addition to Wambeke, the other mastermind behind the popular variety show is Pat Ward.

Throughout the year, Wambeke and Ward text each other ideas for skits and things to do during the show.

"He's very versatile as a comedian, he can assume a lot of different roles," Wambeke said about Ward. "He gets deep into his characters and has fun with the parts."

The 2015 Cabin Fever Concert features three performances, including a Dutch Oven Dinner Show Saturday, Jan. 17 and a Sunday, Jan. 18 matinee performance, both in Hermiston. And then a week later, the entourage will head to Ione for a Jan. 25 Dutch Oven Dessert Show at the American Legion Hall.



John Wambeke and Eric Jepsen perform during a past Cabin Fever Concert.

Billed as Wambeke & Friends, many of the performers have taken the stage numerous times over the years. Among those who have grown up on the Cabin Fever stage is Eric Jepsen, an Ione High School and Eastern Oregon University graduate.

The state fiddle champion also has donned diapers and gotten into other antics that Wambeke and Ward come up with.

This year's installment includes holy matrimony for Jepsen — in the form of one of Echo resident Jerri Fife's mannequins. Jepsen's marital status is reflected in the clothes strung across the clothesline during the show.

"He's just a great guy and very talented," Wambeke said about Jepsen.

Of course Thelma and Eunice, the church ladies of Dibley Parrish, will make an appearance. There's quite the controversy, as the minister wants to make some changes in the hymnbook.

Wambeke and Ward really play up the gossiping spinsters. Eunice is a bit brash and the audience should get a bang when she's stricken by "taco tummy."

Among the familiar faces are the event's house band, which features Jepsen, Frazer Wambeke, Derek Munson and Luke Basile. Other special guests include Stacey Cooley, Cory Cooley and Joe Lindsay.

New to the Cabin Fever stage this year is Justin Gross. The crooner and trombone player is originally from Richland and has been performing on cruise ships. Also, Angela Ditchen of Stanfield will share her alto voice and the Ione pep band will play.

Featuring nearly three dozen musicians, the pep band isn't just school kids. Directed by

## Cabin Fever Concert schedule

### Dutch Oven Dinner Show

•Saturday, Jan. 17; 6 p.m.  
•Hermiston Conference Center  
•415 S. Highway 395, Hermiston  
•\$35, advance tickets required

### Matinee Show

•Sunday, Jan. 18; 3 p.m.  
•Hermiston Conference Center  
•415 S. Highway 395, Hermiston  
•\$10 or \$25/family of four, available in advance or at the door

### Dutch Oven Dessert Show

•Sunday, Jan. 25; 3 p.m.  
•American Legion Hall  
•325 W. Second St., Ione  
•\$15, advance tickets required  
NOTE: Tickets for the Hermiston performances are available at The Cottage, 1725 N. First St. Tickets for the Ione show can be purchased at the Ione and Heppner branches of the Bank of Eastern Oregon.

Jordan Pembrose Rust, the band includes community members of all ages who play instruments.

With only a handful of dinner show tickets left, Wambeke urges people to check on availability as soon as possible. Tickets for the Hermiston matinee show are abundant and can be purchased in advance or at the door. Due to the Dutch oven preparations, the Ione tickets also must be purchased in advance.

For more information, search Facebook for "Cabin Fever Concert."

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at [tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com](mailto:tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4539



Eric Jepsen, an Ione High School and Eastern Oregon University graduate, has grown up on the Cabin Fever stage.

**BOARDMAN**

# Council again approves waiver for water and sewer hook-ups

East Oregonian

Boardman City Council has once again passed a resolution allowing property owners and developers to waive the fee for connecting to the city's water and sewer lines until the end of the year.

The incentive is intended to make Boardman a more attractive option for building new homes by temporarily waiving what are known as system development charges within city limits, up to \$10,000.

Community Development Director Barry Beyeler said additional housing

is a major need in town, and waiving those charges makes it easier for developers to get their projects started.

City council has passed a similar resolution every year since 2010, waiving the charges for all construction within residential or commercial districts. In four years, 22 projects have qualified for the waiver.

"It's been utilized by several developers and contractors to help get a development started," Beyeler said.

Two new subdivisions are already planned in Boardman: the Tuscany subdivision will consist of up to 180 single-family houses just

south of city hall along Main Street, while Chaparral Park will offer for-rent duplexes at the end of Kinkade Road.

Project developer Riverwood Homes, of Boise, said the first two units in Tuscany should be finished by February.

In other news from Tuesday's meeting, Mayor Sandy Toms swore in council members Brandon Hammond, Brenda Proffitt and Delbert Turner, who were each elected in November. Their terms will run through Dec. 31, 2018.

The next city council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 20 at 7 p.m.

**BRIEFLY**

## Class highlights childcare techniques, first aid

HERMISTON — An upcoming class at Good Shepherd Medical Center provides information on childcare techniques, children's developmental stages, basic first aid and infant/child CPR.

Babysitting Basics 101 is available for babysitters ages 10-15. The session is Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the GSMC conference room, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston.

Those planning to attend must pre-register and pay the \$30 fee, which includes all class materials and lunch.

For more information, contact 541-667-3509 or [healthinfo@gshealth.org](mailto:healthinfo@gshealth.org).

## Presentation to provide info on local STEM programs

PENDLETON — Information about local STEM programs — Science,

Technology, Engineering, and Math activities and projects — is featured during the upcoming meeting of the American Association of University Women.

Josh Ego, the after school programs coordinator with the Umatilla School District, and Patricia Dawson, of the Oregon State University Extension Service and the 4-H STEM programs, are the featured presenters. The public is invited to the no-host luncheon meeting, which begins Saturday at 11 a.m. at The Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub, 230 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton.

For more information, contact Marlene at 541-276-7596 or [mokaykrout@yahoo.com](mailto:mokaykrout@yahoo.com).

Submit information to: [community@eastoregonian.com](mailto: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.