

PENDLETON

Registrations available for Daddy Daughter Dance

East Oregonian

Registration is now underway for the annual Daddy Daughter Dance sponsored by Pendleton Parks & Recreation. The event is Saturday, Feb. 7 from 6-9 p.m. at the Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate.

Open to girls in kindergarten through eighth grade, the cost is \$32 per father and daughter pair and \$10 for each additional girl. The evening includes dancing, snacks and refreshments, including the always popular chocolate fountain, a posed picture, a special gift at the door and a chance to win prizes.

In its 11th year, the event usually sells out. Organizers encourage those planning to attend to register early.

For more information, call 541-276-8100, go to www.pendletonparksandrec.com or stop by the parks office, 865 Tutuilla Road.



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Participants hit the dance floor during a past Daddy Daughter Dance. Registration is open for this year's event, which is Saturday, Feb. 7 at the Pendleton Convention Center.

MILTON-FREEWATER

City taps watershed council scientist to fill vacant seat

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

When it came down to choosing a replacement for an open seat, the Milton-Freewater City Council turned to a familiar face.

Steven Patten's natural interest in city issues was listed by multiple councilors as one of the reasons he edged out the two other applicants for the position at a meeting Monday.

As an audience member, Patten has been a frequent attendee of council meetings since moving to Milton-Freewater in 2009.

"Steven Patten almost had an unfair advantage in that he started filing his application several years ago when he started attending council meetings regularly," Councilman Ed Chesnut said. "That impressed me partly because that was my prelude to getting on council. ... He was showing an interest long before there was any reason to be interested."

Patten, an environmental scientist for the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council, beat out Frank Millar, retired crop consultant for Wilbur-Ellis Co., and Verl Pressnall, the former maintenance director for the now-defunct Ferndale and Umapine school districts and the president of the East

End Rod and Gun Club. According to meeting minutes of Patten's Dec. 8 interview, he was selected for the seat despite living in Milton-Freewater for the least amount of time.

After growing up in Colorado, Patten moved westward to attend Walla Walla University, his family's alma mater dating back to his grandfather.

Patten obtained bachelor's degrees in history and biology in 2007 and a master's degree in 2009, moving to Milton-Freewater shortly thereafter.

Although he praised the council for their practical approach to governing, he also offered ideas about areas where Milton-Freewater could improve.

While Milton-Freewater lies in close proximity to tourist attractions like Tollgate and the Blue Mountains, Patten pointed out that there was nowhere in Milton-Freewater for potential tourists to stay.

Patten also suggested the city create a brand that businesses could use to attract more customers.

A frequent topic of discussions during the interviews was the lack of integration

between Milton-Freewater's Hispanic population and the rest of the community.

Despite comprising 43 percent of the city's population, no Latinos sit on the city council and very few are involved in city government.

During his interview, Millar said he encouraged two of his Hispanic acquaintances to apply for the council seat to no avail.

In an interview after his appointment, Patten said the city needed to take "baby steps" in improving relationships with the Hispanic community.

Patten said he's made an effort to talk with his Latino neighbors, including his recent decision to seek the council seat. He added that grassroots efforts like this could help build a foundation toward real progress.

Although ultimately unsuccessful, the two other candidates didn't leave the meeting completely empty-handed. After appointing Patten, the council appointed Pressnall to the city's budget committee and Millar to the planning commission.

Another carryover from the last meeting was a potential

all-terrain vehicle ordinance. First presented at the Dec. 8 meeting, the council continued to discuss an ordinance that would allow ATVs to drive on city streets.

The issue was brought about by resident Jesse Shaw, who said he had a \$15,000 ATV that he wasn't allowed to use on city streets.

At the December meeting, Police Chief Doug Boedigheimer said staff didn't have an opinion one way or another about an ATV ordinance.

But on Monday, City Manager Linda Hall added that staff was strongly opposed to allowing ATVs on Highway 11, which they viewed as being too dangerous.

Shaw seemed to find the most traction with Councilman Brad Humbert, who offered to work with Shaw to create an ATV committee that would write an ordinance for council consideration.

Although supportive, Humbert said Shaw and other ATV ordinance supporters would need to provide details on the ATV permitting process and designated crossings on Highway 11 before he could approve it.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.



Patten

HERMISTON

Board to pick from three locations for new senior center

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Now that Hermiston has a \$2 million grant to build a new senior center, it's time for the city to decide in what part of town that \$2 million should be invested.

Hermiston Parks and Recreation director Larry Fetter, who wrote the Community Development Block Grant on behalf of the senior center advisory board, told the Hermiston City Council Monday that the board has narrowed down three properties to study.

The first is a 3.23-acre parcel on Northeast Fourth

Street behind Wal-Mart that is for sale.

"It's in a residential area and it has lots of opportunity for green space around it," Fetter said.

Another option would be the former Goodwill building at 740 West Hermiston Avenue. Fetter said the property is 1.5 acres and has a "willing seller." The building on the property probably has asbestos and other issues making it difficult to re-purpose into a senior center, Fetter said, but the city would have the flexibility to use the \$2 million block grant to tear down the old building, rebuild and

turn some of the asphalt surrounding it into landscaping or some sort of community garden.

"A \$2 million investment in that neighborhood would be a game-changer, no doubt about it," Fetter said.

The third option would be to build the 8,000-square-foot facility behind the Hermiston Public Library. The senior center would span the parking lot behind the library and block the section of road near the old Armand Larive archway where Northeast Second Street curves around to become Ridgeway Avenue.

"It would go nicely with

the redevelopment work in the Urban Renewal District," Fetter said, referencing the "festival street" the city wants to create in front of city hall nearby.

Fetter said the advisory board would study all three options further and at some point come to the city council with a recommendation.

City councilors asked that an informational report accompany the recommendation so they could see why the board settled on that particular option.

"I think there are advantages to all three," councilor John Kirwan said.

BRIEFLY

Hermiston police handled fewer calls in 2014

HERMISTON — Police saw a drop in total incidents and arrests from 2013 to 2014, according to the Hermiston department's annual report.

Hermiston police Chief Jason Edmiston on Tuesday released the by-the-numbers take on what his agency did last year. Officers handled 23,097 total incidents in 2014, down 14 percent from 2013. Most of that was due to a drop in calls for service, which fell 26 percent in the year.

Hermiston police made 1,279 arrests in 2014, an 8 percent decrease from 2013. But officers also handed out more citations: 6,045 in 2014 versus 5,575 in 2013, though the average over the past 10 years is 7,206.

Hermiston Police Department has 31 employees, including the chief, two captains, four sergeants, 14 patrol officers and three detectives. Department personnel, including seven reserve officers, participated in more than 5,900 hours of training in 2014. That's almost the equivalent of work of three full-time jobs.

Edmiston reported the department in

2015 will track implementing policies for officer-worn body cameras, the affects of Measure 91, which allows Oregonians to possess recreational marijuana and goes into effect July 1, and finding ways to handle people suffering from mental health problems in the midst of dwindling resources.

Tea party town hall features Sen. Hansell

MILTON-FREEWATER — Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, will address a town hall hosted by the Milton-Freewater Tea Party Patriots Wednesday at 7 p.m. at Milton-Freewater's American Legion Hall, 424 N.E. Eighth Ave.

Hansell plans to outline his ideas for the 2015 Legislative Session, which starts next Monday. The senator serves on the Ways and Means Committee and two sub-committees: Economic Development and Transportation, and Natural Resources, along with the Transportation Sub-Committee of Ways and Means. Hansell is especially interested in opinions about expenditures on transportation projects and other topics affecting his constituents.

Larry Nye, moderator of the town hall and coordinator of the Milton-Freewater Tea Party Patriots, urged everyone who wishes to share thoughts to bring written remarks, which can be given to Hansell after the meeting.

OSBA looks to replace vacant board seat

ATHENA — To replace the ascending Dave Krumben, Athena-Weston School Board member Scott Rogers was chosen to represent the Gorge region for the Oregon School Board Association Board of Directors.

Krumben, a member of the Pendleton School Board, vacated the seat to become board president.

An association press release states Rogers wants to prioritize replacing aging school facilities and enrollment while on the board.

Rogers, a Molalla native and Linfield College graduate, joined the Athena-Weston School Board in 2011.

The association is a member services organization for locally elected school boards at the school district, educational service district, charter school and community college levels.

UMATILLA

Couple seeks semi driver who left crash scene

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

A Umatilla man has offered a \$100 reward for information leading to the semi driver who left after his wife crashed into the big rig Thursday morning.

Toshiko Boulester, 65, was on her way to work at about 5 a.m. from Umatilla to Hermiston when she slammed into the side of a semitrailer blocking both lanes of Highway 730 near milepost 180. The crash totaled her 2003 Nissan Altima, according to the police report she and husband Jack McWhinnie had with them Tuesday. She suffered deep bruises on both knees and across her chest, and even bruised her lungs.

"I'm lucky to be alive," she said. "God must have been with me that day."

Boulester said it was still dark at the early hour and the semi did not have any lights on. She was driving about 50 mph in the Nissan, she said, when she saw the trailer and slammed on the brakes. But, she said, it was too late.

Boulester said she was in pain and dazed from the crash and the driver of the semi never got out. She tried to call McWhinnie, but his phone was on vibrate and he was asleep. Boulester said she decided to seek help and walk back to their home on South-

shore Drive, about a quarter of a mile away.

She said she was hurting, dazed and a little scared, and she encountered a man and asked for his help, but he turned her down. She reached their home, she said, pounded on the door and awoke her husband.

McWhinnie said they hopped into his pickup and rushed back to the crash scene, but the semitrailer was gone. An ambulance then rushed Boulester to the emergency department of Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, which also is where she works as a room cleaner.

The local hospital sent her to Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland, Washington, where she stayed the night. She visited her family doctor Tuesday and said she is still sore. She showed the purple and yellow bruises that mar her knees and upper chest and left shoulder.

McWhinnie said the \$100 is what he could offer. "If I can find the guy, yeah," he said, "it's well worth it."

McWhinnie said people with information about the crash can call him at 541-922-4673, or call the Oregon State Police in Pendleton at 541-278-4090.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

Backhoe cuts phone service for thousands

By ALFRED DIAZ
Union-Bulletin

Emergency officials are questioning how one backhoe could knock out 9-1-1 service for thousands of residents in five counties and cripple thousands of businesses Friday afternoon.

"How is it possible that a fiber-cable cut can cause that widespread of an issue through multiple counties?" Walla Walla Emergency Services Communication Director Steve Ruley said. "We were very lucky in this county. Things worked out well. We had a prompt response and things were handled well."

At approximately 2 p.m., a backhoe operator near Lewis Road in Pasco cut through a major fiber-optic cable, resulting in numerous communication failures for emergency personal in Walla Walla, Franklin, Garfield, Columbia counties and the Milton-Freewater area, CenturyLink spokeswoman Kerry Zimmer said.

The biggest source of problems was loss of cellphone service, but even landlines were said to have experienced some failures, Ruley said.

By 5:30 p.m. Friday, CenturyLink crews had fixed the line, restoring 9-1-1 and other services that

rely on the fiber-optic cable. During the communications failure, cellphone availability was sporadic. Some users were able to send texts and make phone calls while others lost all services.

Residents and businesses with phones service through the Internet were also unable to call, including several businesses that often rely on emergency services.

"We get a lot of calls from the nursing home facilities," Ruley said.

In response to the failures, members of the local chapter of Amateur Radio Emergency Services came forward to provide communications backup.

"They heard what was going on and came down. And we deployed them to the nursing home facilities," Ruley said.

Emergency systems are designed with redundancy, which means there is a backup system should the main system fail. Many of these backup system involve rerouting 9-1-1 calls to other nearby dispatch centers.

In Milton-Freewater, Zimmer said dispatchers also lost 9-1-1 communications, but were able to reroute incoming calls through Umatilla Emergency Dispatch.

SUBMIT COMMUNITY NEWS

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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