

HERMISTON

Pet Rescue complaints on council agenda

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

The city of Hermiston's contract with the Eastern Oregon Humane Society Pet Rescue will be a topic of discussion at Monday's city council meeting after the city received complaints from residents about how the animal shelter is run.

The council will discuss a report prepared by City Manager Byron Smith, which concludes that Pet Rescue is meeting the requirements of its contract with the city and recommends the city council continue with the contract.

Pet Rescue has a \$30,000 contract with the city to house animals the city has collected and to administer the city's dog licensing program.

Suzanne Phillips, who runs a blog dedicated to criticism of Pet Rescue, was joined by three other residents during a January city council meeting in encouraging the city to examine the humane society's practices. They claimed the shelter had a higher euthanasia rate than necessary and turns away volunteers and offers of help regularly.

"We don't need to settle for substandard practice and care," Phillips said.

Pet Rescue owner Beau Putnam declined to comment, but has said through Facebook and other venues that opponents' claims are misleading.

Putnam told the *Hermiston Herald* that while the shelter does have to euthanize some animals not adopted in order



EO Media Group photo by Sean Hart
Humane Society of Eastern Oregon Pet Rescue volunteer Saige Borrego, 14, Hermiston, feeds the dogs at the shelter in January. The city council will discuss renewing its contract with the animal shelter at its Monday meeting.

to make room for new ones, the shelter's 39 percent kill rate also includes animals that are too aggressive or sick to adopt out and those that owners specifically bring in to be euthanized.

He said the shelter welcomes volunteers and recently announced that the Oregon Humane Society will increase the number of animals it takes from Pet Rescue starting this month.

In other news, the council will also

approve the final language of two ballot measures for the May election. One asks voters to approve an updated version of the city's charter and the other amends that charter to change the city's municipal judge from an elected position to a appointed one.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

BRIEFLY

Umatilla County OKs reimbursement for wolf costs

PENDLETON — Umatilla County Board of Commissioners approved paying the Cunningham Sheep Co. of Pendleton more than \$20,000 to protect livestock from wolves.

Cunningham Sheep in December sought \$20,469 from the county's wolf depredation compensation fund. County commissioners approved the expenditure at their meeting Wednesday.

County documents show the money will compensate the company for several costs to abate wolves, including a new sheep camp and herder, two employees for wolf monitoring and four sheep dogs.

The county board also approved a \$10,000 economic development grant to the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center. The money will come out of tourism and economic development funds.

The chamber asked for a \$15,000 grant. The chamber in its grant application stated it lost nearly \$15,000 a year due to restructuring of transient room tax in Umatilla three years ago. That punched a hole in the chamber's budget, making "it difficult for the chamber to function on a firm financial footing."

The chamber, according to the application, will use the funds for operating costs and the manager's salary for a few months.

Umatilla County opposes voter registration bill

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners opposed a state House bill Wednesday that would expand voter registration.

House Bill 2177 would mandate voter registration through driver's licenses. The bill would cost

the county \$35,000 a year to mail ballots to approximately 14,000 new registered voters.

Board chairman George Murdock questioned adding so many people who show no interest in voting.

But more problematic, he said, is the "undue burdens and hardships" the bill would put on the county. If the state attached funds, he said, it could be a different matter.

The board voted 3-0 on an order against the bill.

CAPECO trains people to identify elder abuse

PENDLETON — While society has made great strides in identifying child abuse, the Community Action Program of East Central Oregon's Gatekeepers program wants to elevate awareness of the other end of the spectrum — elder abuse.

Started in Spokane in 1978, Gatekeepers trains people that regularly work with elderly people in how to identify abuse.

The program has since spread to Portland and is now in Umatilla and Morrow counties for the first time.

Max Jones, CAPECO's Gatekeeper coordinator, said he's been targeting bank tellers, mail carriers and meter readers because of their frequent interactions with the elderly community.

The program specifically teaches employees how to learn the warning signs of a senior in need of help, gather more information and get them the help they need.

Jones mostly leads trainings at workplaces, but said he's available to anyone who's interested in the Gatekeeper program.

He can be reached at 541-278-5672.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to news@eastoregonian.com

Highly pathogenic bird flu makes Eastern Oregon debut

ODFW collects six infected ducks in one day

By **DON JENKINS**
EO Media Group

Wild ducks collected in Morrow County have tested positive for highly pathogenic bird flu, the first confirmed cases in Eastern Oregon of the virulent Eurasian virus spreading into the U.S. West.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed Feb. 2 that three wood ducks and three northern shovellers shot by hunters at the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge in early January were infected.

The USDA also confirmed that four other ducks shot in Oregon in early January — three in Columbia County and one in Lane

County — had bird flu.

All 10 ducks had an H5N2 virus, a mix of Eurasian and North American strains. Migratory ducks are immune from the highly contagious virus' ill effects, but pass the disease along to poultry, and raptors, which die.

The findings confirmed that highly pathogenic bird flu is circulating among waterfowl in different regions of Oregon. Until this week, the USDA had confirmed only two avian flu cases in mallard ducks shot in Lane and Columbia counties.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife collected samples from fewer than 100 hunter-harvested ducks

on Jan. 30 in Morrow County, ODFW's migratory game bird coordinator, Brandon Reishus, said. Finding six with the disease on one day "was a little bit surprising," he said.

"We're keeping track of (the virus in wild birds) as a service to the poultry industry, so they can know where it's at, so they can take appropriate actions to protect their flocks," he said.

The USDA has now confirmed 25 cases of disease-causing bird flu in wild birds since mid-December. Besides Oregon, highly pathogenic avian flu has been found in wild birds in Washington, Idaho, California, Nevada and Utah.

The ducks in Columbia County, two mallards and a northern pintail, were har-

vested Jan. 5 at the Sauvies Island Wildlife Area near Portland.

The mallard in Lane County was harvested Jan. 7 at Fern Ridge.

Oregon's duck season ended Jan. 25. Reishus said he expects the USDA to report more cases as the National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa, tests samples collected later in the hunting season.

Health officials say the virus does not pose a risk to humans. Captive falcons have died after eating infected duck meat.

The virus also has been found in non-commercial flocks in Washington, Oregon and Idaho; a game bird farm in Washington and a Foster Farms turkey operation in California.

Eastern Oregon Forum to discuss local climate change

East Oregonian

A facilitated discussion of what climate trends are being experienced locally is featured in the upcoming Eastern Oregon Forum.

In addition, panelists will explore the impacts and opportunities related to the Blue Mountain uplands, forests and local agriculture during "Climate Change: Impacts to the Mid-Columbia Basin."

The forum is Tuesday at 7 p.m. in the Science & Technology Building room ST-200 at Blue Mountain Community College, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton. Tickets are \$6 at the door and students are admitted free.

Jeff Blackwood of the Umatilla County Climate Change Focus Group will introduce the speakers and facilitate the panel discussion and question and answer session. Blackwood is a retired forest supervisor on the Umatilla National Forest.

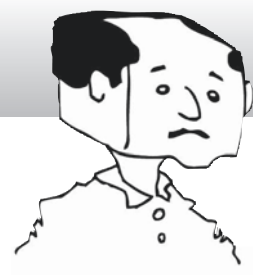
The speakers include Mary C. Wister, science and operations officer at the National Weather Service in Pendleton; David Powell, retired forest silviculturist and climate change coordinator for the U.S. Forest Service; and Chad Kruger, director of the Washington State University Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The March 10 Eastern Oregon Forum will focus on climate change impacts to

water, fish, wildlife and public health.

The Eastern Oregon Forum is a collaborative effort among leaders from Blue Mountain Community College, InterMountain Education Service District, the *East Oregonian*, American Association of University Women and Harriet Isom, former United States ambassador.

For more information, call Karen Parker at 541-966-3177.

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