

BOARDMAN

Fire destroys barn, kills pigs

East Oregonian

Several pigs were killed in a barn fire outside of Boardman on Monday. Boardman Rural Fire Protection District chief Marc Rogelstad said the department got a call about

9:40 a.m. about a barn on fire on Paul Smith Road, and when they got there it was already engulfed in flames. The structure, a combination barn and shop, was a total loss. A sow had to be put down due to injuries from

the fire, Rogelstad said, and her litter didn't survive. He said the cause of the blaze appeared to be a heat lamp used to keep the pigs warm. Owners Raymond and Tanya Akers were not home at the time of the fire.

New FDA official inherits raft of projects, challenges

WASHINGTON (AP) — One of the nation's leading medical researchers joined the Food and Drug Administration on Monday, taking on the agency's No. 2 leadership job at a critical juncture for prescription drugs, medical devices and tobacco products. Dr. Robert Califf comes to the job of FDA deputy commissioner after more than 30 years as a researcher and administrator at Duke University. But Califf, 63, is no stranger to FDA issues. For years he served on committees that advise the FDA on scientific and medical matters. And he was considered for the agency's top job at least twice, under the administrations of

Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. The timing of his appointment has raised speculation that he may eventually be nominated to lead the agency. The week after announcing Califf's new position, FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg said she would be leaving the agency after nearly six years on the job. Currently, the FDA's chief scientist is serving as acting head of the agency. A leading expert in cardiology and medical study design, FDA watchers say



Dr. Califf

Califf would be a natural fit for the job. "In terms of running clinical trials, there's nobody better in cardiovascular medicine than Rob Califf," says Ira Loss, an industry analyst. "So why not put the best guy out there in charge?" Regardless of his job title, Califf will inherit a raft of projects and potential challenges, including unfinished tobacco regulations and proposals from Republican lawmakers focused on streamlining product reviews.

PENDLETON: No precedent for stormwater system

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posed increasing the city's staff by 11.5 new jobs as a part of the improvement effort. The report suggested starting the rate increases and fee implementations July 1.

Water

Of the three utilities discussed at the workshop, the water utility was the big ticket item. It would take an estimated \$42.9 million and 5.5 new positions over the next 10 years to sufficiently address the upgrades and maintenance the city's water system needs. Under the firm's recommendation, the city would need to nearly double the money it takes in from water customers over the next decade. Factoring inflation, the average water user would see their water bill jump roughly \$5 each year over the next 10 years, from \$37.40 in 2015 to \$93.83 in 2025. Additionally, the report suggested instituting a systems development charge for water, a first for Pendleton. The \$3,769 fee would be assessed to new development projects that affect the city's water system. The consultants attributed the large capital improvement bill to the growing needs of the city's water system and the stagnant funds being used to address them. While ahead of the average in Umatilla County, water in Pendleton generally costs less than in 15 other counties in Oregon and Washington. Public Works Director Bob Patterson said Umatilla County's average is deflated by Hermiston's water rate, which can remain low because of Hermiston's continued growth. Meanwhile, water and wastewater operating costs continue to rise beyond the consumer price index raises the city imposes on utilities.

Deb Galardi, the master plan's financial subconsultant, said utility operating costs are affected by factors outside the consumer price index, such as power and chemical costs. She recommended the city move to a different price index for utility rate raises. With rising costs, the city's water system isn't getting any younger. While water pipes are supposed to be replaced every 100 years, the water main under Southeast Third Street is 104. Water staff who attended the meeting said they already spend a third of their time responding to leaks and other water emergencies, and they feared that continued use could lead to another line break. The previous break was in 1995 at Third and Dorion, causing the entire downtown area to flood with water.

Sewer

Thanks to recent upgrades made to the wastewater treatment plant, the city's sewer system is in better shape, though making needed maintenance and improvement will still require a rate hike. The consultants estimated sewer rates will need to rise by 57 percent over the next decade to cover the \$14 million cost, which includes hiring four new workers. Unlike water's steady increase, the suggested rate hike for sewer rises by 7.5 percent for the first five years before tapering off to 1.3 percent over the second half of the decade. The average sewer customer would see their bill rise from \$39.73 today to \$51.86 ten years from now. A \$3,089 systems development charge would also be established under the firm's recommendation.

Stormwater

Unlike other utilities, there's no precedent for funding the storm water system.

The city has never charged for it and consultant Mike Carr said there is minimal data and records about the system. "Stormwater has been off our radar for quite a while," Patterson said. But given the Umatilla River's path through the center of town, city officials consider funding and the city's levy and drainage system a must. Because the system needs replacement every 150 years instead of every 100, the cost is considerably less. Still, three new full-time jobs would be required, with one job transferred from the streets department. After five years of the flat stormwater fee, the consultants proposed changing the rate structure to base the charge on the amount of impervious area on the customer's property, which would decrease most residential rates. The systems development charge would be \$52 per square foot of impervious area.

Council Reacts

The council seemed to unanimously support the master plan proposal, but weren't on the same page on how to implement it. While Chuck Wood said the city needed to hold more public forums on the issue and was skeptical the city could start the rate hikes on July 1, Al Plute said the proposals needed to be enacted as soon as possible to capitalize on an aging population. Patterson said the consultants and staff would return with a new rate structure, which would keep customers on the lower end of the income scale in mind, and estimates of how different kinds of dwellings and businesses would be affected by the proposed rate increases.

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TRAIN: Was hauling 95 cars to Hinkle

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ty, though one did contain residue from liquid petroleum gas. The 95-car train was on its way from Idaho to Union Pacific's Hinkle Yard near Hermiston when it derailed. Eight other trains were delayed as a result of the incident, which remains under investigation, Castillo said. It is the second Union Pacific derailment in northeast Oregon in less than a

year. On Aug. 1, 2014, 13 empty train cars derailed along Highway 730 about 16 miles northeast of McNary Dam, five of which slid down into the Columbia River. Meanwhile on Monday, a Union Pacific train also derailed 386 miles away near Oakridge in Lane County. Five cars went off track in an isolated area of the Cascade Range, two of which were loaded, though no hazardous materials

were involved. The accident damaged 86 feet of rail, 10 to 20 railroad ties, a signal and a train detector, as well as clips and tie plates, according to a report in the *Register-Guard* newspaper. Like the Meacham derailment, Castillo said no one was hurt and the cause is under investigation. Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4547.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Students hosted a tour of the first student-built home in the planned Fieldstone Crossing subdivision next to Armand Larive Middle School.

HOUSE: Class gave students chance to decide if any trades associated with homebuilding are for them

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spaces. In the summer those spaces get especially hot, warming up the cooled air being pushed through the ducts, and in the winter the opposite happens. The home students are building in Hermiston is one of the first in the area to bring the ducts inside the house where temperatures are more moderate. Students are also incorporating energy efficient windows, lights, a tankless water heater and high-efficiency furnace. Richard Hayden of Eastern Oregon Heating and Air helped the students install the energy-efficient duct system. He said he enjoyed being a mentor for the program.

"They picked things up quick," he said. "For kids they've got a pretty good work ethic." He said he is interested in working on next year's house if the district invites him back. Hayden said he appreciated that the homebuilding class gave students a chance to decide before leaving high school if any of the trades associated with homebuilding are for them. "I think it's a great program," he said. "I think getting to know what you're getting into helps." Hermiston High School sophomore Elizabeth Herrera said the class decided to have the open house before they put up the drywall so people could see the workmanship behind the scenes.

The homebuilding program's website has a live feed of the construction site, and Herrera said community members told the class they were disappointed when the students started working inside the house and they could no longer see what was going on. "People say, 'Oh yeah, I saw you guys putting up siding the other day,'" Herrera said. She said knowing people could be watching the construction site at any time was good incentive to always wear her safety gear and not skimp on other safety procedures. Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

DATA: Bill would cap taxable values of companies

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Under central assessment, the worth of a company's brand and other "intangibles" are taken into account in calculating how property taxes are assessed on data centers. The bill, however, would not take into account the worldwide value of the data centers. The bill also would exempt from central assessment Internet service providers with superfast computing, and substitute a different formula. It is seen as an incentive for Google Fiber to choose Portland for a high-speed Internet network.

Another part of the bill would deal with the after-effects of a 2014 ruling by the Oregon Supreme Court, which defined Comcast's cable and Internet services as "data transmission services." The Oct. 2 ruling subjected Comcast to central assessment, which the Oregon Department of Revenue shifted to in 2009, and led to increasing Comcast's taxable value from \$434 million to \$1.14 billion — and a subsequent increase in its property tax bills. The court sided with the state agency, based on a 1973 law. "The evidence in the

record about the nature of Comcast's Internet and cable transmission services is effectively undisputed and establishes that ... both services are 'data transmission services,'" Justice Virginia Linder wrote for the court. The bill would cap the taxable values of Comcast and similar companies, based on their historical investment in Oregon. According to the Legislative Revenue Office, which analyzes tax measures, the bill would cost local governments \$16.2 million in property taxes in the 2016-17 tax year, \$33.5 million in the following two-year cycle, and \$35 million in 2019-21.

BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION

Dark Canyon conservation easement would protect fish and wildlife habitat

The Bonneville Power Administration intends to fund the purchase of a conservation easement on approximately 2,928 acres of riparian and upland habitat, located along the Dark Canyon Creek in Union County, Ore. The current landowner will continue to own and use the property in a way that is compatible with the conservation easement. Cattle will still graze in the uplands but will be excluded from the areas along Dark Canyon Creek and Meadow Creek in order to conserve fish and wildlife habitat.

Funding for the purchase of the easement is part of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's Accord agreement with BPA and its federal agency partners. When the purchase is complete, the Blue Mountain Land Trust will work with the landowner to manage the property under the easement for fish and wildlife conservation purposes. BPA will receive a third party right of enforcement on the conservation easement to ensure that the habitat values on the property and identified in the conservation easement are always protected.

The Blue Mountain Land Trust will develop a management plan for the property. BPA, the Blue Mountain Land Trust and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation will review the plan for consistency with the mitigation and conservation purposes of the acquisition. Letters describing the proposed purchase, a map and information describing environmental review requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act are available at www.efw.bpa.gov.

For more information, contact BPA project manager Dorothy Welch at 503-230-5479 or dwelch@bpa.gov. You can also call toll free 800-622-4519.

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