

AIRPORT: Range could create an estimated 317 jobs and generate \$178 million in economic impact in first three years

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in 2013, far larger than the \$535,000 the city has invested in it so far.

It also carries a sizable risk.

While the \$545,000 from the strategic reserve fund acts as a grant as long as the city promotes the range for the next five years and completes the hangars by Jan. 31, 2016, the \$1.155 million from the infrastructure finance authority comes with more strings attached.

A \$500,000 grant is contingent upon the range generating 130 jobs over a five year period. The city will get credit for each job they create, which will reduce the amount due if they fall below the 130-job goal.

POLICE: Street crime unit made 25 percent of department’s arrests

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an extra eye on 35 houses where residents let the department know they would be out of town.

A good share of the department’s more proactive work is implemented by a street crime unit created in 2014. Edmiston said the two-person team doesn’t respond to calls for service. Instead, the officers are “100 percent proactive,” most notably in tracking down and arresting people with outstanding warrants. Last year the unit was pulled back into regular patrol duty for part of the year to cover staffing holes, but still made 25 percent of the department’s total arrests.

“These are not significant arrests, they’re simple warrants,” Edmiston said, “but if (the suspects) are not on the street they’re not committing crimes.”

Crime isn’t spread evenly across the city. Hermiston’s two recent shootings, for example, took place in the same half-mile stretch of Northwest 11th Street between Orchard Avenue and Good Shepherd Medical Center. Over the 12 months, seven different assaults were also reported to police on that stretch of road, according to the HPD’s online crime map.

A neighborhood’s makeup can have an effect on crime. Edmiston said parts of town with a lot of apartment complexes, such as the western edge of Hermiston, have a higher population and therefore a higher concentration of crime.

The second half of the funding will be a straight loan to the city for \$655,000.

Although 130 new jobs would mean explosive growth for the city, one study suggests that goal is conservative.

According to a recent study by Oregon State University economist Bruce Sorte, the range could create roughly 317 jobs and generate \$178 million in economic impact in the first three years of operation.

Starting operations remains a challenge, though.

Corbett said the range hasn’t been able to start test flights because the city and the University of Alaska Fairbanks — the entity that manages all the ranges in Oregon, Alaska and Hawaii —

are still discussing how they will divide testing fees.

He said the complicated nature of federal regulations has made complying with them a painstaking process.

“It’s like this bowl of spaghetti that you have to untangle and lay out,” Corbett said.

Steve Chrisman, economic development director and airport manager, said in a January interview that the fee issue had been resolved.

Chrisman did not respond to an interview request as of press time.

Even if the range generates no jobs, Corbett said he wasn’t concerned about paying back a potentially seven figure loan.

According to Corbett, the estimated \$126,000 in revenue generated from hangar

rentals should cover any debt accumulated through the city’s deal with the state.

While most of the public wasn’t privy to the financial package’s approval, Corbett said citizens will have a chance for input when staff presents a detailed project proposal to the council in the coming months. Early estimates state the financial package will fund three hangars and 20 storage units.

Corbett said some people have already demonstrated serious interest in renting a hangar or storage unit, although he did note that some facilities would be built before being rented out.

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

“I’m extremely hesitant to label somebody because they could be a gang member today and start turning their life around tomorrow. Is that fair?”

— Jason Edmiston, Hermiston police chief

However, he said apartment managers have been good in recent years about working with the department to head off problems.

Stan Stradley, director of the Umatilla County Housing Authority, said HPD has been proactive in working with landlords.

“They’ve been very forward on the issues and wanting to solve issues and we appreciate that,” he said.

Stradley said the housing authority works closely with Erica Sandoval, the crime prevention officer, on initiatives like Neighborhood Watch. He said in his experience the department doesn’t shrug off calls for service as a “civil matter” they don’t need to respond to.

HPD has also started sending notices to property managers every time officers respond to one of their properties, helping the housing authority fulfill its zero tolerance policy on crime.

“That’s a good informational tool, so we can take action where we need to take action,” Stradley said.

Addressing gang problems

After Alonso Madrigal was killed in Hermiston on March 4 in a shooting police believe was perpetrated by gang members, Edmiston

knows gang prevention is on Hermiston residents’ minds.

It’s a hard subject to keep statistics on, he said, because police often can’t know for sure if something was gang-related or if a suspect is a gang member unless they “self-profess.” Gangs have a code of silence that usually prevents that.

Some law enforcement agencies make it a point to officially label residents as suspected gang members. Boardman passed an ordinance in 2013, for example, creating a list of “criminal gang affiliates,” But Edmiston said he doesn’t agree with such lists.

“I’m extremely hesitant to label somebody because they could be a gang member today and start turning their life around tomorrow,” he said. “Is that fair?”

That doesn’t mean Hermiston police aren’t aware of the presence of gangs and aren’t trying to get them off the streets by arresting their members for criminal behavior. In fact, Edmiston said HPD has drawn criticisms about racism for its efforts to target gang-related activity.

It may look like racial profiling, he said, but it’s just a fact of life that the gangs in this area are predominantly tied to gangs originating in Latino countries. Therefore

“I think every reporter should be storming the capital with pitchforks in hands to demand change,”

— Lee van der Voo, independent journalist

Jackson County Sheriff’s Office in court for copies of concealed-weapons permits. The sheriff’s office lost, but still wants \$18,000 to provide the records.

Oregon’s law allows public bodies to recoup the cost to provide records, but not make a profit. In the pre-digital age that meant hard copies and material costs, but Voo said that today’s fees seem more like leftovers used to generate revenue and dissuade people from requesting records.

Randall questioned why public agencies should be able to charge to provide records when clerks are already getting paid a taxpayer-funded salary. An agency may want \$25 an hour to provide records, he said, but doubted the person doing that work was getting paid that well.

Recently, Umatilla County charged the *East Oregonian* \$30 an hour for staff to fulfill a large records request. Pendleton wanted \$54 an hour to provide the salary information but then backed off after the *EO* revealed Hermiston did it for free.

Umatilla County also charges 25 cents a page for paper copies, while

the actual paper and ink are closer to a cent or two. And Umatilla County Circuit Court charges 25 cents per page for copies of court documents — even digital copies. The court, though, allows you to take digital photos of the documents for free. That’s better than Clackamas County Circuit Court, which bans taking digital pics of documents. And Marion County Circuit Court charges \$3 per request to email documents and 20 cents per page for someone to scan documents first.

Randall said Oregon has a need for public records education in the state. Special districts, for example — such as water or fire districts — serve vital roles at the local level. But they often do not realize they are subject to Oregon’s public records law. An online course from the state could be a benefit to both records seekers and records keepers.

Oregon’s new Gov. Kate Brown took office in the wake of the scandal that forced Kitzhaber to resign. She proposed legislation to audit the state’s public records process. Voo said the system does not need another study to show what is not working.

“We’ve known what the problem has been for years,” Voo said.

Randall said reporters should mark their calendars for next February to check on the results of that study — if there are any.

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

COMING EVENTS

THURSDAY, MARCH 19
LEGISLATIVE TELECONFERENCE, 7 a.m., Blue Mountain Community College Pioneer Hall boardroom, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton. Join Sen. Bill Hansell and Rep. Greg Barreto for information on the happenings in Salem.

WALKING FOR WELLNESS, 8:30-9:30 a.m., Pendleton Recreation Center, 510 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton. (541-276-8100).

VETERANS BENEFITS ROUNDTABLE, 10 a.m., Stokes Landing Senior Center, 195 N.W. Opal Place, Irrigon. Information about changes in veterans burial benefits, survivor benefits and government markers. (541-922-6420).

PRESCHOOL STORY AND CRAFT TIME, 10:30 a.m., Milton-Freewater Public Library, 8 S.W. Eighth Ave. (Lili Schmidt 541-938-8247).

BOARDMAN SENIOR MEAL SERVICE, 12 noon, Boardman Senior Center, 100 Tatone St., Boardman. Costs \$4 for seniors 55 and older and \$5 for adults. (541-481-3257).

HERMISTON SENIOR MEAL SERVICE, 12 noon, Hermiston Senior Center, 435 W. Orchard Ave. Costs \$3.50 for seniors 50 and over, \$4 for adults under 50, \$4 for Meals on Wheels home delivery. Extra 50 cents if center provides table service. Transportation can be arranged by donation. (541-567-3582).

PENDLETON SENIOR MEAL SERVICE, 12 noon, Pendleton Senior Center, 510 S.W. 10th St., Pendleton. Cost is \$33.50 for seniors, \$6 for those under 60. Meet new friends, enjoy pool, puzzles, crafts, snacks, Second Time Around thrift store and more from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For Meals On Wheels call CAPECO at 541-276-1926. (Maxine 541-276-5303).

SKILLS FOR LIFE, 3-5 p.m., Pendleton Recreation Center, 510 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton. The first hour includes gym activities, the second hour focuses on life skills for middle and high school students. Free, but registration requested. (Danny Bane 541-379-4250).

“BENEFICIAL BUGS,” 6-8 p.m., Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub, 230 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton. OSU Master Gardeners presentation on insects that are beneficial to local gardens. (Shevon Hatcher 541-278-5403).

THE ARC UMATILLA COUNTY BINGO, 6 p.m. doors open, bingo starts at 7 p.m. 215 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston. (541-567-7615).

FIDDLER’S NIGHT, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Hermiston Terrace Assisted Living, 980 W. Highland Ave., Hermiston. Join jam session or just listen. Refreshments served. (541-567-3141).

FIRST DRAFT WRITERS’ SERIES, 7 p.m., Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St., Pendleton. Gathering features a reading by author Robert Stubblefield; participants can sign up for open mic time of 3-5 minutes.

MARIJUANA REGULATIONS OPEN HOUSE, 7 p.m., Pendleton City Hall council chambers, 501 S.W. Emigrant Ave. Pendleton City Council and Planning Commission members will accept public input on marijuana regulations for the city and engage in discussion, but no decisions will be discussed or made. (Evan MacKenzie 541-966-0261).

FRIDAY, MARCH 20
WALKING FOR WELLNESS, 8:30-9:30 a.m., Pendleton Recreation Center, 510 S.W. Dorion Ave. (541-276-8100).

TODDLER STORY TIME, 10:15-10:45 a.m., Pendleton

Public Library, 502 S.W. Dorion Ave. (541-966-0380).

STORY & CRAFT TIME, 2 p.m., Echo Public Library, 20 Bonanza St.

AFTER SCHOOL STORY TIME, 4 p.m., Pendleton Public Library, 502 S.W. Dorion Ave. Older siblings welcome. (541-966-0380).

FABULOUS FISH FRIDAY, 5-6:30 p.m., St. Anthony Hospital Blue Mountain Cafe, 2801 St. Anthony Way, Pendleton. All-you-can-eat fish tacos with rice, beans and cole slaw for \$7.75 adults, \$6.50 senior and \$5 children; \$4.25 for clam chowder in a bread bowl; baked potato bar \$4 with toppings, \$3 for butter only.

NIGHT AT THE CHILDREN’S MUSEUM, 5-8:30 p.m., Children’s Museum of Eastern Oregon, 400 S. Main St., Pendleton. Parents get a night out and kids get dinner, games, crafts and a movie. Costs \$20 members/\$25 non-members, \$10 for each additional child. Preregistration required. (541-276-1066).

VFW BINGO, doors open at 6 p.m., games start at 7 p.m., Hermiston VFW, 45 W. Cherry St.

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY WIND ENSEMBLE, 7 p.m., Hermiston High School auditorium, 600 S. First St. Free concert, but a freewill offering will be taken. (Madeline Turnock 503-280-8550).

SATURDAY, MARCH 21
ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT BREAKFAST, 6-10 a.m., White Eagle Grange, between Pendleton and Pilot Rock on Highway 395 South. Suggested donation \$7 for ages 8 and up, \$4 for ages 5-7 and free for 4 and under. Donate 2 non-perishable food items for \$1 discount. (Gail 541-276-3778).

FREE FOR ALL, 9:30-10:15 a.m. Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St., Pendleton. Family art experience for children up to age 12. Children under 8 should be accompanied by an adult. (541-278-9201).

FAMILY HISTORY WORKSHOPS, 10 a.m., Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 850 S.W. 11th St., Hermiston. Workshops on researching family history presented at 10 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. (Jeanette Byers 541-667-7046).

HIP & HANDMADE, 11 a.m. to noon, Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St., Pendleton. Free drop-in art project class for adults. (541-278-9201).

STRAIGHT TALK WITH BECKY MARKS, 2-4 p.m., Prodigal Son Pub & Brewery, 230 E. Court Ave., Pendleton. Share thoughts with Ward 1 councilwoman. (541-276-9147).

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION BANQUET, 4:30 p.m. doors open, Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate. Dinner; more than \$45,000 in raffles and games, including 23 guns; live and silent auctions including a 2015 Oregon state elk tag good for any unit in Oregon from Sept. 1 through Nov. 30; ladies raffle table and more. Ticket packages vary and some raffles are limited; purchase online in advance at events.mref.org (www.pendletonmref.org).

The EO publishes a list of coming events as space allows. It’s posted weekly at www.eastoregonian.com. All items are assumed free, nonprofit and open to the public unless otherwise noted. Coming events items should be submitted well in advance to calendar c/o East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801, 333 E. Main St., Hermiston, OR 97838 or community@eastoregonian.com.

RECORDS: Investigation rated Oregon a C- for risk of corruption

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asked several local governments for names and ranks of police officers and firefighters, each employee’s salary and what the city actually paid each. Hermiston, for example, emailed the information the next day; Pendleton took until Dec. 15 to provide most of records; Milton-Freewater sent complete information Dec. 15. Others took longer, for reasons that include the records holder was absent to take care of family.

Civil servants are not always to blame for delays. Voo said Oregon’s public records law is fraught with 478 exemptions and harsh penalties for people who violate the exemptions. She said she would feel paralyzed if she was in the position of deciding if a records request violated the law or not.

That’s one reason she helped develop an online database, also called Redacted, that searches for exemptions. Type in “corrections officer,” for example, and the app reveals 15 possible exemptions.

Agencies use exemptions to deny access to records. The Hermiston School District, for example, will not release video showing a possible confrontation between teacher Webster Castaneda and a middle school student during a basketball practice in late 2014. The district stated the record fell under OR 192.501 (12), an exemption for “personnel discipline action, or materials or documents supporting that action.”

The Morrow County School District in late 2014 cited exemptions when the *EO* sought information related to a coach, including the coach’s salary. The district refused to release even that, and per the law the *EO* appealed the denial to Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson. He told the school district some of the information requested was exempt but other information, such as the salary, were clearly public records.

Voo said the Redacted app allows records seekers to find those exemptions up front and plot a better course toward what they are after. That can cut down on the back-and-forth with agencies to hash out details.

She also described the state of access to public records in Oregon as “abysmal.” She is not alone. The Center for Public Integrity’s 2012 State Integrity Investigation rated Oregon a C- for risk of corruption. Of 14 graded categories, only one received an F: public access to information.

“I think every reporter should be storming the capital with pitchforks in hands to demand change,” Voo said.

Government also uses high fees to block access to records. Voo was part of former Oregon Attorney General John Kroger’s task force in 2010-11 to make Oregon more transparent. She said she heard several cases of agencies wanting upward of \$100,000 to provide public records. For three years *The Mail Tribune* newspaper in Medford battled the