

PETERSON: Son of a former superintendent

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He was paid \$128,215 for the 2014-2015 school year. Peterson said he has been considering retirement for the past few years, but came to a more definitive decision part-way through the school year. “The timing just seemed right,” he said. It has always been Peterson’s intention to give the district a year’s notice before his retirement to avoid leaving the school system in the lurch. Citing his 33 years in education, Peterson, 55, said his retirement would give him the chance to try something new, although he hasn’t decided what that is yet. Following his graduation from Pendleton High School in 1978, Peterson started his career as a teacher at Gresham High School in 1983. Peterson returned to Pendleton High School in 1990, serving as a math teacher, guidance counselor, athletic director and assistant principal before leaving in 2003. Between 2003 and 2009, Peterson was the principal at Lincoln Primary School, West Hills Intermediate School, Washington Elementary School and Sunridge Middle School. The son of a former superintendent, Peterson was named to the position in 2009, replacing Jim Keene. Peterson believes he’s left

the district in a good position, especially considering two new elementary schools will open at the start of the next superintendent’s tenure. The new schools were made possible by a \$55 million bond passed in 2013, an event Peterson considered one of the highlights of his tenure. Pendleton School Board Chairwoman Michelle Monkman said Peterson’s retirement was bittersweet. “I understand why he’s leaving, but I don’t have to like it,” she said jokingly. As the board chair, Monkman will be tasked with leading the effort to find Peterson’s replacement. Monkman said the board doesn’t have a set procedure for hiring a superintendent, a process she wants to have in place by the start of the school year in August. With the school board having a year to make a decision, Monkman expects to have a good pool of candidates to choose from. Board Vice Chair Debbie McBee said Peterson jumped the district “light years ahead” during his tenure and expects his successor to continue that trend. McBee said her ideal candidate would continue to focus on professional development, parent engagement and community outreach while still adding his or her own personal touch.

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WAGE: Oregon cities cannot set their own minimum wages

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voters approved in 2002. Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles are phasing in \$15 minimum wages. But under a 2001 law, Oregon cities and counties cannot set their own minimum wages, although the Portland City Council and Multnomah County commissioners have set \$15 minimum wages for their full-time government workers. House and Senate committees conducted public hearings on minimum-wage bills on April 13, but there hasn’t been much action since. There are about a dozen pending bills, ranging from \$10.75 to \$15 per hour, and a few removing a pre-emption on local action. The 2015 session must end by July 11, and leaders are pressing toward a target of July 4. “Our view is that this is going to be on the table, but not particularly moving anywhere,” said D.J. Vogt, who spoke for the Oregon

Business Association. “We would remain opposed to lifting the pre-emption on the minimum wage.” Business groups fought to rein in conflicting requirements by Portland and Eugene, whose city councils in 2014 approved differing policies for businesses to provide paid sick leave for workers. Senate Bill 454, which awaits votes in both chambers, sets a statewide standard for businesses subject to the paid-leave requirement and benefits provided to their workers – although the bill allows Portland to retain a lower number of employees. Vogt also said the Senate remains a political barrier to a minimum-wage increase. Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, has said a jump to \$15 is not feasible. “It is going to be a proposal for conversation,” Kotek said. “But it could very well be a proposal that meets a lot of people’s needs and that people could support it. We’ll have to wait and see how it goes.”

PORT: Working on potential land sale with Umatilla Electric Cooperative

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Road was being considered for the warehouse. Puzey said he was disappointed to learn the warehouse was no longer a viable project. Overall, Puzey said that port business is moving in the right direction. He said he hopes to receive good news from the Legislature regarding funding for a project to provide more water for agricultural purposes in the region. He said he looks forward to working with a

water users group that would lease a portion of the port’s Columbia River water right, which is currently unused. Puzey said the port is also working on potential land sales. He said the port has already sold an option to the Umatilla Electric Cooperative to purchase 80 acres of land south of Highway 730 to build a solar array. Another 160 acres south of Two Rivers Correctional Institution is being considered by a solar energy company for the same purpose, he said.

PARK: City is 75 percent to goal of \$50K

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jumped into the slime. “My boys were playing in a foot of mud,” Friday Bracher said, grimacing. The boys came clean in the shower, but the park wouldn’t recover — at least without major help from the community. “It was in such poor shape, we didn’t know where to start,” Paul Bracher said. It took many months to raise enough funds to start, but the town of 187 people is now well into a major makeover. A retaining wall lines the drainage ditch. A few weeks back, almost 40 community members laid 14,000 square feet of sod above a new sprinkler system. Concrete curbing borders the park. Five new trees dot the lawn. A couple of weeks ago, the town debuted the park with a community picnic. Last Saturday, almost 100 people showed up for a 5-kilometer run to raise money for swings. Runners sprawled in the shade afterwards and relaxed as kids played around them. One of the runners, Tammie Parker, surveyed the scene happily. Parker, associate vice president of human resources at Blue Mountain Community College, serves on the park board, as does her husband, Larry. She



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Bree Perkins uses the slide at the newly renovated Helix City Park. A 2012 storm left the park covered by more than a foot of mud.

remembers the shock she felt at seeing the standing water and mud covering the park. “In a short amount of time, it was destroyed,” she said. “It was overwhelming.” But, Parker said, despite the \$50,000 price tag, the

community started putting one foot in front of the other. The city applied for grants. A fundraising campaign was launched and is 75 percent to the goal, thanks in part to a Wildhorse Foundation grant of \$10,000.

“To me, there was no option but to bring the park back,” Parker said. “That would have been a disservice to the community and the kids. They need a place to go and it needs to be safe.” — Tammie Parker, one of the runners

“To me, there was no option but to bring the park back,” Parker said. “That would have been a disservice to the community and the kids. They need a place to go and it needs to be safe.” Paul Bracher and Larry Parker, both leaders in the effort, marveled at the transformation. “There are people in the park again,” Bracher said. Parker said he often passes by the city park. On the last drive-by, he noticed a couple of teenagers. “They were just hanging out at the park,” he said. “I hadn’t seen that for a couple years.”

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HEALTH: Would not be designed to replace primary care provider

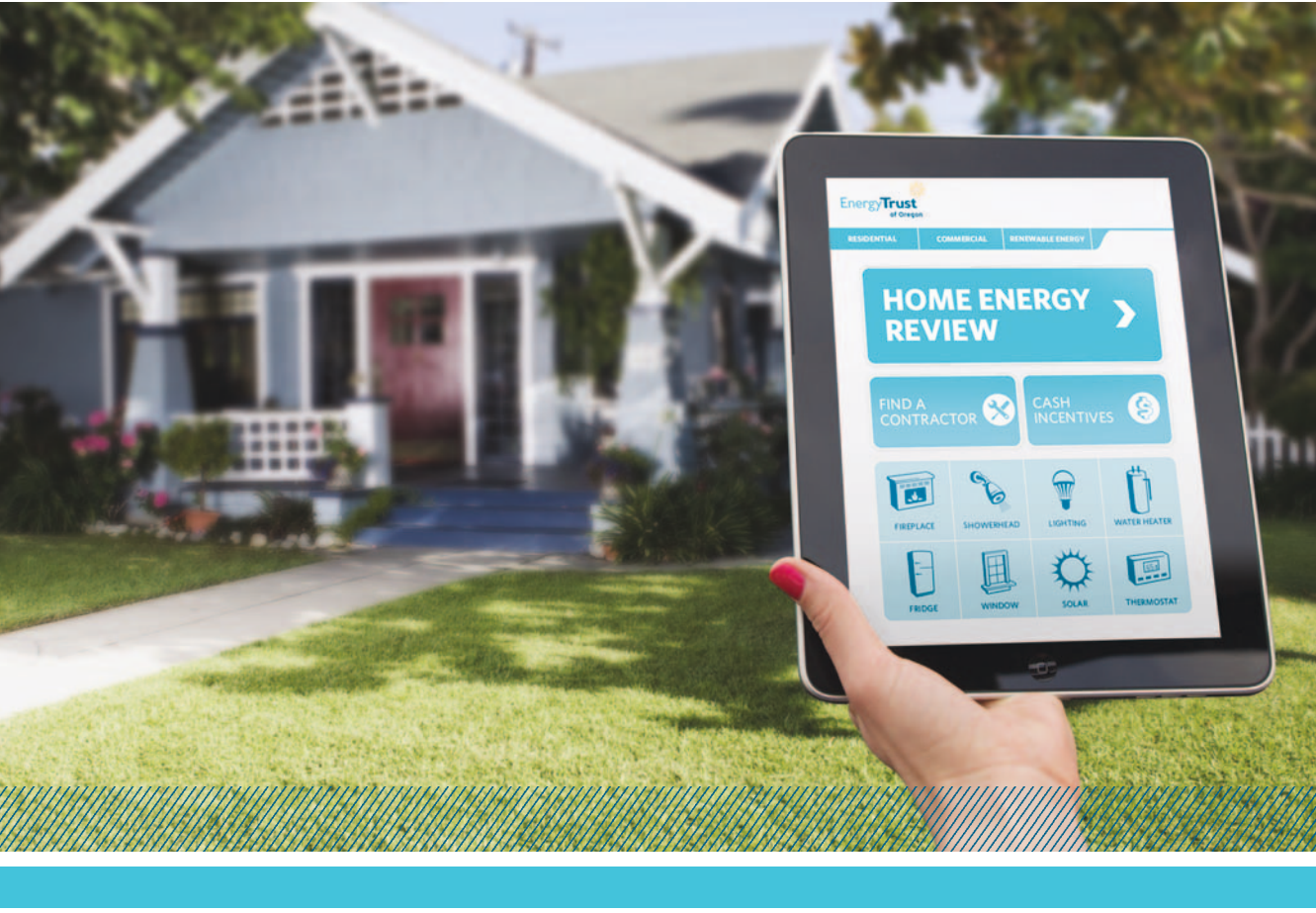
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barriers like transportation and cost to get health problems taken care of so they don’t hinder their education. “This year we had about 75 kids who couldn’t come in because they weren’t vaccinated,” Mishra said, referring to the statewide Exclusion Day. “We have a solution.” One thing Mishra said the clinic wouldn’t be set up for is reproductive exams. “We will not be distributing condoms and will not be testing for STDs on-site,” he said. Mishra said the clinic would not be designed to replace students’ primary care provider, but rather be an entry point into the health system. The clinic could screen for asthma, for example, but would then send the student to a

primary care provider for long-term treatment of the chronic condition. “I don’t see us having a negative effect on anything,” Mishra said. “We’ll probably be sending more referrals their way.” DeBolt said the health department sees it the same way. Her office has already partnered with Pendleton School District on a school-based health center and she said it has been successful in helping students reluctant to go see a doctor. Recently a provider at the clinic found a heart murmur in a student that had gone undiagnosed for “a while” and was able to refer the student for treatment. “It’s one more set of eyes on your students,” she said. The district will find out in September whether it has been approved to join the growing list of 68

school-based health centers in Oregon. DeBolt said once the site is certified for the first time it is added to the program’s base funding amount that has been approved by the legislature every biennium since the early 1990s. Mishra said the plan is to open the health clinic in Hermiston High School’s current print shop in early 2016. On Monday night the school board also approved the 2015-2016 budget as recommended by the district’s budget committee. The \$76.3 million budget, which includes about \$5 million in unappropriated reserves and \$7.9 million in debt service for bonds, drew no comments during the public hearing before the board’s regular meeting.

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