PENDLETON

Food oil manufacturer moving into airport

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

While the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range slowly churns toward its goal of becoming an economic engine for the area, the rest of the airport industrial park is seeing growth in other areas.

At its meeting Tuesday, the Pendleton City Council approved the lease of an A Avenue building to Gianni's Fine Foods, a company that specializes in manufacturing dressing, olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

Owner John Spenger, who was at the meeting, said that Gianni's already participates in the Pendleton Farmer's Market and will hire some seasonal workers during the summer.

Gianni's is relocating from La Grande to Pendleton after Spenger's rental agreement came to an abrupt end.

Spenger called finding the building, which has been used for city storage, a "miracle."

Due to the company's interest in stocking locally manufactured products, Spenger said he plans to approach the Haggen Food Grocery Store chain to start stocking Gianni's products on its shelves

Haggen has acquired 146 Albertsons and Safeway stores across the western United States, including one in Baker City.

Steve Chrisman, airport manager and economic development director, said the addition of Gianni's to the airport industrial park is consistent with the airport commission's effort to clean up the park's main sections.

The council unanimously approved a three-year contract with two three-year renewal options.

Gianni's will be required to pay $842 a month, with rent increased annually based on the consumer price index.

City staff continued the theme of airport development by discussing a staff proposal to turn some land west of the airport into a "Regionally Significant Industrial Area."

According to city planner Evan MacKenzie's report, the designation would give the city access to state funding programs and expedite certain regulatory processes for developers.

Chrisman said there are only 13 of these areas across the state, which would give Pendleton an advantage.

The city needs to apply to the state to obtain the designation. MacKenzie said he will present a letter of support for the council to vote on at a future meeting.

No action was taken.

In other news, the city agreed to a repayment plan with the developer of the Pendleton Heights housing project for the $793,323 the city spent improving utilities and roads.

City Manager Robb Corbett said a recent appraisal of the property values it at $2.64 million, up from the $1.84 million it was valued at before the development.

PENDLETON

Meeting rallies support for Outdoor School

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

EO file photo

Sunridge Middle School sixth-graders take an art class on the banks of Buck Creek at the 2015 Pendleton School District's outdoor school in the Blue Mountains, east of Pendleton.

Supporters of Outdoor School in Pendleton want to see more community outreach and activism to persuade state legislators to fully fund the program for every fifth- or sixth-grade student in Oregon.

About 10 people attended a meeting Tuesday evening at Pendleton City Hall to discuss the importance of outdoor education and rally behind a statewide coalition working to prioritize Outdoor School funding at the Oregon Capitol.

The Oregon Outdoor Education Coalition formed last year and has two bills currently before the legislature: Senate Bill 439 and House Bill 2648 both call for $22 million in state funding to ensure all fifth- or sixth-graders can attend up to a full week of Outdoor School.

In Pendleton, parents and teachers have already fought to preserve Outdoor School on at least three different occasions. The most recent was in 2011, when a fundraising committee secured more than $31,000 to spare the program from budget cuts.

"I'm just tired of my kids having to have a bake sale for every good thing in school," said Jane Hill, a parent and Pendleton city councilwoman. "There's no doubt (Outdoor School) is a tradition our community wants to keep."

Tuesday's meeting began with presentations about the coalition, as well as the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan, created with the passage of the No Oregon Child Left Inside Act in 2009. The plan is intended to serve as a road map for teaching youth about the natural world, and preparing them to make informed decisions about the future of Oregon's natural resources.

Susan Sahnow, natural resources education program director for Oregon State University Extension Service in Corvallis, said it's their job to develop resources that support engaging kids in outdoor education.

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>
> — **Jane Hill,** parent and Pendleton city councilwoman

"Oregon has this rich legacy and history in natural resources, and we have a duty of ensuring our children are ready to take care of that future," Sahnow said.

Everyone at the meeting agreed they want to see a full week of Outdoor School paid for at the state level. The question then became what they can do to build support locally.

Ideas ranged from media outreach and letters to the editor to a campaign directed at local representatives. The coalition shared some research to help state their case, including a 2014 public opinion poll that shows two-thirds of Oregon voters support spending $20 million per year on Outdoor School — 70 percent of which live outside Portland and the Willamette Valley.

A 2008 study by the American Institutes of Research also shows kids who attend outdoor programs raised their science scores by 27 percent.

Vern Willcox, who was involved in starting Pendleton Outdoor School in 1971 and served as its director until retirement, said the program is essentially like a job application for kids who might become interested in working in a natural resource-based career.

"These kids can see an opportunity for employment down the road, and a great life," Willcox said.

Chris Schulze, a sixth-grade teacher at Sunridge Middle School and Outdoor School coordinator, said the challenge is now to understand the value of outdoor education in a education environment that increasingly places emphasis on test scores and classroom learning.

"If we could change the way schools are graded and perceived ... then some of this can really be facilitated," Schulze said.

Funding for statewide Outdoor School is another challenge. One proposal would see an increase in solid waste fees to support the program, though that idea has met resistance in Gilliam County where Waste Management operates a landfill that processes trash from Seattle.

Rex Burkholder, a Portland activist and member of the Outdoor School Coalition steering committee, said they will remain persistent even if the two bills do not pass this session, and could even appeal directly to voters with a ballot measure.

"We need to solve this problem on a statewide level. It's not good enough to do it piece by piece," Burkholder said. "People want Outdoor School ... We are working our butts off to try and get the bills passed."

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4547.

BRIEFLY

Pilot Rock OKs sewer fee for staff

PILOT ROCK — Pilot Rock City Council adopted it's upcoming $2.15 million budget Tuesday night and voted for council members and staff pay the new $10 sewer fee.

The council earlier voted 5-1 in favor of the budget, with councilman James Hinkle as the opposing vote. He said the city could have cut more expenses.

Councilman Deacon Perkins pushed to have council members start to pay the base rates for water and sewer. Since 1994, the city has not charged those rates to council members or city employees. Perkins moved to discontinue that practice for council members only, but that died for lack of a second.

He then asked to have staff and council pay the new $10 fee for the sewer, as well as future fee increases. That passed 4-1, with Hinkle against and Councilman Ray Corwin, who missed recent meetings, abstaining.

The $10 user fee was added at the last council meeting to help pay for a $3.7 million upgrade to the city's sewer lagoons. It represents a 55 percent increase to the base fee.

Perkins also moved to phase out the rate waiver at the end of each council member's term. That also died for lack of a second.

"Philosophically, ethically," Perkins said, "I don't think we should be compensated."

Umatilla postpones zoning decision

UMATILLA — Umatilla City Council members postponed a decision on commercial zoning changes for a third time Tuesday.

The Umatilla Planning Commission worked for months to come up with a proposal that would define where commercial businesses — including new strip clubs — could locate. The planning commission sent the recommendations to the city council in April.

The city enacted a moratorium preventing new adult entertainment businesses from opening last year and extended the temporary ban earlier this year. With the moratorium set to expire July 14, the council decided to continue discussion about the commercial zoning changes to a special meeting at 7 p.m. July 13 at Umatilla City Hall.

Mayor Dave Trott made the recommendation to postpone a decision before any discussion about the zoning changes. He said, except for strip clubs and marijuana dispensaries, none of the changes needed to be enacted immediately. He said the council should take the time to understand and discuss the issue.

City Manager Bob Ward said the city may be able to extend the moratorium again, but he was not certain whether the notification requirements could be met before the current extension expired.

Hermiston plans controlled burn

HERMISTON — Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services is planning a controlled burn on the butte Thursday, June 25 at 5 p.m. to prepare for the Fourth of July.

The goal is to safely remove vegetation that could pose a fire hazard during the city's Stars and Stripes fireworks show.

Fire chief Scott Stanton said the burn will be rescheduled if the wind is too strong to safely keep the fire under control. He said while air quality is always a concern, the public safety benefits of removing a fire hazard outweigh concerns about smoke during the burn.

Ghost town awakens pioneer spirit

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

Contributed photo

Reenactments and gunfights are part of the fun during Saturday and Sunday´s Pioneer Days in Shaniko.

One of Oregon's sleepy ghost towns wakes up this weekend as Shaniko celebrates Pioneer Days.

Located about 60 miles south of Biggs on Highway 97, the small town celebrates the pioneering spirit of those who came to live off the land and those who built a town. The event is complete with a scavenger hunt for the kids, so they also can appreciate the lifestyle of the past.

Pioneer Days runs Saturday and Sunday. Visitors are encouraged to come for the day, or stay the weekend. RV parking and camping is always free along the streets of Shaniko. Lodging accommodations are available in Maupin, about 34 miles northwest of Shaniko or Madras, which is about 38 miles southwest.

The free event includes gun fight reenactments, modern day pioneering, spinning and lots of information. And you won't want to miss the new Toy and Game Museum at the school house. Vendors are encouraged and welcome. Breakfast is available both days by the Shaniko Chamber of Commerce, lunch can be purchased from various vendors and a barbecue, campfire and music are planned Saturday evening.

A few of the activities and offerings provide a glimpse into the past, such as coal-forge blacksmithing and kids' games. However the real focus is on Shaniko's pioneers who left their mark.

Intertwined in the murals depicting Shaniko's history are those men and women that made the town what it was then or preserved it to what still exists today. The murals introduce Ed Martin and the William Rees family, as well as new ones featuring the Moody, Fowlie and Farrell families.

Shaniko is about 140 miles from Hermiston. To get to there, drive on Interstate 84 and take Exit 104 at Biggs Junction, then continue south on Highway 97 for about 55 miles. Locals highly recommend fueling up at Biggs, as Shaniko doesn't have a gas station.

For more information, go to www.shanikooregon.com, search Facebook for "Shaniko Pioneer Days," or call 541-489-3434.

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539

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