

Umatilla County picks dispatch advisory group

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County now has an official board to advise the operation of the sheriff's office dispatch center.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners voted 3-0 Tuesday at the county courthouse in Pendleton to establish the Dispatch Advisory Committee. Local police and fire department heads called for the creation of such a board since the dispatch center took over communication duties for most emergency agencies in the county.

The initial membership consists

of the following representatives:

- Hermiston City Manager Byron Smith;
- Hermiston police Capt. Travis Eynon;
- Hermiston Fire District Chief Scott Stanton;
- Pendleton Chief of Police Stuart Roberts;
- Pilot Rock Mayor Virginia Carnes;
- Stanfield City Manager Blair Larsen;
- Umatilla Police Chief Darla Huxel;
- Sheriff Terry Rowan;
- Undersheriff Jim Littlefield;
- Dispatch commander Lt. Kathy

Lieuallen;

- and Umatilla County Commissioner Bill Elfering.

There also is a spot for Pendleton's next fire chief, who the city is working to hire. The order establishing the committee also allows for more members.

Commissioners also voted 3-0 to pay Sun Ridge Systems \$55,397 for annual support of the software that runs on the dispatch center's computer systems. Sheriff's Lt. Kathy Lieuallen, the dispatch center commander, and other county officials have expressed concerns the software has not always worked or worked well. County counsel Doug

Olsen said Sun Ridge has worked better as of late.

The board heard from county tax assessor Paul Chalmers on House Bill 3492, which allows counties to create a property tax exemption for solar projects. Chalmers said the solar project at Madison Farms, Echo, would qualify for the exemption, and he recommended the board create a policy to deal with new law. Commissioners took no action.

The board also gave its approval for county emergency manager Jack Remillard to continue working on a new mutual aid agreement for fighting large fires. He said Umatilla, Morrow and Union coun-

ties have an agreement already, but fire districts created it and it did not require the approval of commissioners. He said he would like to see an agreement that involves commissioners.

And in other business, the board of commissioners:

- Approved spending \$29,000 for a 2013 street sweeper for the road department.
- Approved paying \$16,720 to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for funding of wildlife services.
- Approved paying \$8,400 to Eastern Oregon Business Source for professional development programs in June and July.

HERMISTON

Find the treasure, get ice cream

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

Like a ninja in the dark, Erica Sandoval, Hermiston Police Department crime prevention officer/ youth officer, hid a golden medallion.

The treasure hunt is part of the annual National Night Out festivities in Hermiston, which includes block parties and Neighborhood Watch information. Sandoval hid the golden medallion, which is about 3 inches in diameter and is attached to a red, white and blue ribbon, somewhere within Hermiston.

Sandoval, who has been in charge of hiding the medallion for seven years, gets excited about the hunt because families, individuals and groups of friends look forward to the yearly event.

"It's a great way to be in touch with the community," she said. "As a police officer, we don't always get to do family-friendly things and this is just one tradition that keeps going."



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

This golden medallion is hidden somewhere in Hermiston as part of the National Night Out festivities in Hermiston. The person who finds the treasure wins an ice cream social block party during National Night Out Tuesday, Aug. 4 in Hermiston.

each other and encourages the development of Neighborhood Watch areas. It also provides an opportunity for police and firefighters to visit with citizens in a relaxed setting.

There are currently about 50 Neighborhood Watch areas in Hermiston, Sandoval said. Those who aren't involved with the program can learn more about it and get one going in their neighborhood.

As far as National Night Out, Sandoval said nine Neighborhood Watch parties are already confirmed and others can still be organized. To schedule a party, contact Sandoval at 541-667-5112 or

esandoval@hermiston.or.us.

The *EO* is publishing clues regarding the whereabouts of the medallion. The first clue is below and the *EO* will print additional clues daily until someone finds it and takes it to the Hermiston Police Department.

Sandoval encourages people to put on their thinking caps. The clues sometimes refer to Hermiston history, song lyrics, books, movies or people.

"I think everyone wants to be a detective with the clues," she said. "It taps into everyone's inner detective."

In addition, Sandoval enjoys seeing people of all ages participate in searching

for the treasure. She said the event also brings neighborhoods together. The winner's ice cream party, Sandoval said, is always fun and people come out and talk to their neighbors.

The medallion is located on public property. Although not in plain view, searchers won't have to dig to find it.

Treasure hunt rules:

- Participants must live in Hermiston. Employees and immediate family members, or independent contractors, of the Hermiston Police Department, *East Oregonian* and *Hermiston Herald* are ineligible.
- The medallion is hidden inside the city. The finder will not have to leave property that is publicly owned or controlled by a public agency to find it.
- The person who finds the medallion must immediately take it to the Hermiston Police Department, 330 S. First St. If it's found after 6 p.m., the person needs to call 541-567-5519 and ask dispatch to contact Sandoval.
- The winner of the treasure hunt may keep the medallion.
- The winner acknowledges, by participating in the treasure hunt, the *East Oregonian* will publish his or her name and picture, and the winner will participate in the National Night Out activities.

Clue No. 1

Do I know east and west or left to right?
They say the treasure won't be in plain sight.
Grab a paper and read the news.
But be sure to catch the next clues!

HERMISTON

Council still debating taxi license ban for criminal convictions

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Would-be taxi drivers in Hermiston with a criminal record will have to wait another two weeks to see if they will be able to return to work.

The city council considered an amendment Monday to its new taxi driver licensing system, which currently bars anyone with convictions for crimes of "moral turpitude" in their past.

The amendment before the council Monday would allow drivers with minor convictions that happened more than 10 years ago to drive taxis. It would still allow the police chief to consider "person felonies," such as robbery and sexual assault, no matter how long ago they happened. But an ordinance can only be passed at the same meeting as its first reading if councilors vote unanimously to approve two readings. Councilor Doug Primmer voted against a second reading of the ordinance.

"There is an implicit trust we place on these people," he said, arguing that crimes like identity theft didn't rise to the level of a "person felony" but were still concerning for someone frequently handling money from Hermiston's disabled and elderly citizens.

The council will take up the issue at its next meeting, but in the meantime it did approve a license for a taxi driver who would qualify under the amendment in question.

Nancy Gomez of Hermiston Transit Services gave a tearful appeal to the council to allow her to resume her job as a taxi driver even though she was convicted of theft in her younger days.

"I have convictions from 32 years ago," she said. "They have dogged me my entire life. ... I don't have an excuse for it. I did it. But I have paid my debt to society. I have paid my debt to the court."

She said she needed her job to feed the grandchildren she is raising and it was embarrassing to have to stand up in front of the city council and go through a public appeals process.

"I'm ashamed of what I did, but why should I be up here, a 58-year-old woman in tears, begging for my job?" she asked.

The council declined to grant a license to a second driver who appealed, however, because she had convictions for delivery of a controlled substance that were less than 10 years old.

Not everyone in the taxi business is in favor of an amendment allowing taxi drivers with some criminal convictions. Sundi Marquez, owner of Umatilla Cab Company, sent a letter to the city council urging it to not only keep its ban on taxi drivers with any criminal convictions but to also institute drug testing to catch those who are participating in illicit activities and have evaded the law.

"It seems a responsible stance when our community's most vulnerable members, the elderly and disabled, have the most to lose," she wrote.

The council had previously discussed the issue at its July 13 meeting but put off voting on it after there were questions about whether a conviction that had been expunged would count. The new draft of the amended ordinance the council considered Monday made it clear that under Oregon law the city had to treat expunged convictions like they never happened.

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

HERMISTON

Hotel-booking websites will pay tourism tax

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Online booking of a hotel room in Hermiston could get a little more expensive after the city council passed an ordinance requiring booking websites like Expedia to pay the city's Transient Room Tax and Tourism Promotion Assessment.

The move will increase revenue for the city and benefit local hoteliers who will no longer have to front the money for the \$1 tourism promotion assessment on rooms when customers paid a booking website instead of the hotel.

"Talking to hoteliers, a lot of them are frustrated," assistant city manager Mark Morgan said of the old system. Under that system, if a booking website like Expedia sold a customer a \$100 room

the site would keep a \$20 commission and then pass \$80 on to the hotelier, who would then pay an 8 percent transient room tax on the \$80 and a \$1 tourism promotion assessment.

Morgan said if 10 percent of hotel stays in Hermiston are booked online, that means the city has been losing out on about \$11,000 a year from not taxing the websites' 20 percent commission.

Under the ordinance

passed Monday, if a website sold a customer a \$100 room, the website would be responsible for paying the 8 percent tax on the entire \$100 — plus the \$1 tourism promotion assessment — before passing on \$80 to the hotelier.

Morgan said to compensate booking websites might charge \$109 for a \$100 room, then pass on about \$9 to the city and \$80 to the hotel before retaining their customary \$20 cut.

The ordinance passed Monday would not take effect until October 1 because hoteliers only pay the city quarterly.

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

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Parking lot sale benefits Agape House

HERMISTON — Bargains on furniture, clothing, knick-knacks, books and more can be found at the Agape House parking lot sale.

Clothing is priced at three items for \$1, furniture is as marked and knick-knacks are you name the price. The sale is Saturday from 8:30-11:30 a.m. at 500 Harper Road, Hermiston. Donations are accepted through Friday.

Agape House serves the needs of low income residents in the community. For more information, call 541-567-8774.

******* NOTICE *******

Attention: Oregon rural telephone customers who recently received a letter from their local telephone provider informing them of the need to select a new local long distance provider.

This selection is necessary because your current local long distance carrier, Qwest Corporation, d/b/a CenturyLink QC, located at 100 CenturyLink Drive, Monroe, LA 71203, is withdrawing as a provider of a local long distance services to customers of your local telephone company.* As noted in the letter, you have an opportunity to object to this service discontinuance at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), but the letter contained an incomplete statement regarding the process for such objections. The correct statement reads as follows:

The FCC will normally authorize this proposed discontinuance of service (or reduction or impairment) unless it is shown that customers would be unable to receive service or a reasonable substitute from another carrier or that the public convenience and necessity is otherwise adversely affected. If you wish to object, you should file your comments as soon as possible, but no later than 15 days after the Commission releases public notice of the proposed discontinuance. You may file your comments electronically through the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System using the docket number established in the Commission's public notice for this proceeding, or you may address them to the Federal Communications Commission, Wireline Competition Bureau, Competition Policy Division, Washington, DC 20554, and include in your comments a reference to the \$63.71 Application of Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC. Comments should include specific information about the impact of this proposed discontinuance (or reduction or impairment) upon you or your company, including any inability to acquire reasonable substitute service.

* The local telephone companies are: Asotin Telephone Company, Beaver Creek Cooperative Tel. Co., Canby Telephone Association, Cascade Utilities, Inc., CenturyTel of Eastern Oregon, Inc., CenturyTel of Oregon, Inc., Clear Creek Mutual Telephone Co., Colton Telephone Company, Citizens Telecommunications Company of Oregon, Eagle Telephone System, Inc., Gervais Telephone Company, Helix Telephone Company, Home Telephone Company, Humboldt Telephone Company, Molalla Telephone Company, Monitor Cooperative Telephone Company, Monroe Telephone Company, Mt. Angel Telephone Company, Nehalem Telecommunications, Inc., North-State Telephone Company, Oregon Telephone Corporation, Oregon-Idaho Utilities, Inc., Peoples Telephone Company, Pine Telephone System, Inc., Pioneer Telephone Cooperative, Roome Telecommunications, Inc., Scio Mutual Telephone Association, St. Paul Cooperative Tel. Assoc., Stayton Cooperative Telephone Company, Trans-Cascade Telephone Company