

PENDLETON

Home scores well on energy efficiency

Owner can expect to save more than 20 percent on energy bills

By **GEORGE PLAGEN**
East Oregonian

There is plenty to like about the newest house under construction at Sunridge Estates: three bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms and a well-designed floor plan.

But its greatest selling point might just be the number 79.

That's the home's Energy Performance Score, or EPS, issued by the Energy Trust of Oregon, which rates overall energy consumption and efficiency. The house, at 1903 S.W. Second Drive, is the first in Pendleton to receive an EPS rating.

EPS is a voluntary rating requested by builders before a new home is built. The scores range from zero to 200, with zero being the most efficient — a net-zero rating means the home makes just as much energy on site as it consumes.

With a score of 79, whoever buys the house can expect to save more than 20 percent on their energy bills compared to if it had been built to minimum standard.

"Energy performance is really another indicator of quality," said Susan Badger-Jones with the Energy Trust of Oregon. "You buy a house that you like, it looks good, it looks nice, and then it keeps you warmer, cooler and costs less to operate over time."

More efficient windows, lighting, heating and insulation all contributed to the home's score in Pendleton. Tim Sprenger, owner and contractor of Aspen Construction & Development, said it cost roughly \$5,000 more to do the added work.

Financing for the home and energy upgrades was possible through a partnership with the Round-Up City Development Corpo-



Staff photo by George Plagen

The house at 1903 S.W. Second Drive in Pendleton is the city's first to receive an EPS rating from the Energy Trust of Oregon, which scores overall energy use and efficiency.

ration and Bank of Eastern Oregon, which years ago in the wake of the recession secured community block grant funding to come up with a lending program for much-needed new housing.

In 2013, the nonprofit Round-Up City Development Corporation connected with the Horizon Project, a group that provides services to people with developmental disabilities in Milton-Freewater, to use a portion of defederalized grant money for home-building loans.

Under the program, Bank of Eastern Oregon now covers 60 percent of the loan; Horizon covers 30 percent; and the builder 10 percent. The house at Sundridge Estates is the fifth project to be funded through this alliance, and the first to include an EPS rating.

Sprenger said the home should be finished sometime after the Pendleton Round-Up in September. He expects the built-in energy efficiency measures to give him an added edge in the market.

"I just thought it was an opportunity to have a

different feature that isn't common in Pendleton," Sprenger said. "There's a lot more insulation than a typical house. (Everything) is very efficient."

To receive an EPS rating, Sprenger worked with Energy Trust of Oregon as a third-party verifier, which inspected the home and assigned its numerical score. Had the home been built to minimum standard with the same floor plan, Energy Trust figures it would score 101. At 79, the home should rack up approximately 20 percent savings on utility bills, with an estimated average annual energy costs of \$1,138.

Badger-Jones said EPS has been calculated at several homes in Hermiston, and she expects it will become a more common practice in Pendleton.

"This is really sort of a jump-start here," she said. "It gives people a chance to jump in and see it's not that hard to do."

Mike Short, commercial loan officer for Bank of Eastern Oregon and board vice president of the Round-Up City Develop-

ment Corporation, said they chipped in \$1,600 toward the EPS process to help Sprenger share some of the risk.

"You put a little money into a house on the energy efficiency side of things, and you hope to get it back on the backside," Short said. "You put these investments in, and you hope the buyer recovers that value."

Sprenger said the asking price for the house is \$235,000. The additional \$5,000 spent on energy efficiency should equal roughly an additional \$25 per month on a 30-year mortgage, which he said could easily be recouped in utility savings.

Sprenger said he would likely do the process over again, but added he's just focused on getting this one finished for now.

"I don't think we'll have any trouble getting it sold," he said.

For more information or to inquire about the house, contact Sprenger at 541-379-1903.

Contact George Plagen at gplagen@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

Tribal language program adopts new curriculum

By **WILL PHINNEY**
Confederated Umatilla Journal

In a "last ditch effort" to save tribal languages, a curriculum is being put in place to teach teachers how to teach on the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

The Tribal Language Program in the Confederated Tribes' education department will replicate the system being used at the Salish School, where teachers are using immersion to teach children from infancy to third grade. That will require translation of the Salish curriculum into Umatilla, Walla Walla and Nez Perce.

Meanwhile, students at Nixyaawii Community School will learn only Umatilla this year. Thomas Morning Owl, Fred Hill and Mildred Quaempts, fluent in Umatilla, will instruct the high school students in that language for the next year. Currently, there are no fluent speakers in Walla Walla or Nez Perce that are proficient enough to teach.

Morning Owl heard about the program, which teaches Okanagan Salish, and made a day trip to experience it firsthand.

"It floored me. I was absolutely amazed," he said. "From the time I got to the school until it ended they spoke in nothing but Okanagan Salish."

Morning Owl started "snooping around" and learned that the Salish School had developed its curriculum around just one fluent speaker. The system trains teachers in a beginner, intermediate and advanced program with six books — one teaching book and one literature book for each step.

"It's comparable to a

curriculum presented as a secondary language such as Spanish, French or German," said Morning Owl, who can speak all three.

What's fascinating is that the Salish system was created by a college-level Spanish teacher and his wife, both of whom are non-Indian. The Okanagan program, which now has 17 fluent speakers who are available to teach, is working with as many as 30 children.

Modesta Minthorn, the current language program manager, said she probably will be the "first guinea pig" for teachers, but her main focus will be as coordinator to help the program achieve its goals.

"People think it would be easy, but there's a lot of coordinating," Minthorn said. "We've over-committed before. My number one task is that whatever comes up it doesn't get in the way of what we're focusing on this year."

The Salish group came to the Umatilla Indian Reservation and shared how they built the program in a two-day workshop in late July. Because they believe so much in the program, Minthorn said, the curriculum and facility is being offered for practically free.

"This is going to require the language program to make a one-year commitment to see it through," she said. "Everyone in the program is committed to it."

The program is an effort to keep native languages alive.

"People really have to understand the critical level of our languages," Minthorn said. "We need support from the community, of every individual, to save the languages."

BOARDMAN

Land lease options would support renewable energy

By **GEORGE PLAGEN**
East Oregonian

The Port of Morrow approved two land lease options Wednesday that, if exercised by developers, could become home to a proposed solar farm and biofuel refinery.

Port commissioners extended one option for the Colorado-based ZeaChem, which has tried for years to build a commercial-scale facility making ethanol from wood chips and wheat straw.

ZeaChem already operates a demonstration plant at the port, which successfully produced cellulosic ethanol for the first time in 2013. However, the company soon failed to secure a bridge loan that resulted in layoffs.

Despite the setback, Gary Neal, the port's general manager, said ZeaChem continues to run tests at the demonstration plant and

anticipates breaking ground on a commercial biorefinery by next spring or summer.

ZeaChem's lease option now runs through June 2016, at \$2,100 per month for 25 acres of land.

In another deal, the port commission approved a lease option for 175 acres just north of Airport Industrial Park and west of Tower Road. OneEnergy Renewables, of Seattle, is interested in building a 30-megawatt solar farm on the otherwise rocky and unfarmable land.

The option is for three years: \$5,000 for the first year, \$10,000 the second and \$20,000 the third. If exercised, OneEnergy Renewables would spend \$475 per acre per year to build on the land.

"It's on property that would probably be difficult to develop for other purposes," Neal said. "It was a good fit for us."

PILOT ROCK

City council avoids Facebook 'BS' for now

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Most Pilot Rock City Council members said they did not see any reason for the city to step into the social media pool, let alone to take a swim. The council held off giving staff the OK to respond to comments on Facebook at Tuesday night's meeting.

City recorder Teri Porter told the council there were inaccurate statements about city police scheduling on the Facebook page for Pilot Rock Community Watch, a private group dedicated to informing its members about suspicious activity in the area. Joining the group requires an invitation or approval from members. She said she wanted to post correct information to the group and asked for the council's opinion.

Porter on Monday, Aug. 3, wrote that officers work Friday and Saturday nights in response to concerns about police coverage, but on Aug. 1, officer Gary Thompson checked out early due to a family emergency. Still, he let the Umatilla County dispatch center know so other agencies could respond.

Thompson is the city's only certified officer. New police hire Daniel Badal must first complete Oregon's police training to earn his certification.

Councilman Deacon Perkins said the *East Oregonian's* Tuesday story about the issue raised several concerns, including about public records laws. That story also pointed out a quorum of council members on a Facebook page could violate Oregon's public meetings law.

Councilwoman Kacie Moss said she posted on Facebook to encourage people to bring up concerns at council meetings. She said she commented as a concerned citizen, not as a council member. Councilman James Hinkle said freedom of speech extends to city officials.

Perkins, though, said there need to be safeguards in place and the city already has a newsletter and other means to communicate with residents.

Oregon law specifies three criteria for public records, including if something relates to a government activity. That could include encouraging people to attend a city council meeting. Posts from a personal Facebook page also might not offer much shielding to a government official in light of the Sylvia Hayes' email situation. The fiancée of former Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber must allow a judge to determine which of her personal emails concern public business and are subject to records requests.

Mayor Virginia Carnes, who is a member of the Facebook group, asked guest Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts to weigh in. Pendleton police is about to provide administrative oversight to Pilot Rock's small department for \$4,000 a month until a new chief is in place. (Pendleton City Council approved the inter-governmental agreement last week.) Roberts said Pendleton police staff do not respond to comments on Facebook, and the department generally uses local news organizations to get out information.

He said Pendleton and

other agencies would provide police help to Pilot Rock, and his biggest concern with the Facebook group was a "vigilante movement" to encourage citizens to take up arms. He and Carnes agreed Pilot Rock did not need that.

Offices Badal and Thompson were at the meeting, and Thompson told the council while it is good people are using social media to inform others, someone should call for police. Without that, he said, police do not know there is a need and there is no record of an incident, and thus no police response.

Councilmen Bob Deno and Raymond Doherty joined Perkins in taking the strongest stands against the use of Facebook, and Councilman Ray Corwin expressed some concerns. Deno also asked Porter how she had time in her work day to keep up with Facebook.

"It just takes a second, and you're done," she responded.

Doherty said the city just needs to stay off Facebook.

"It's all BS," he said. "It's just a place to start a fight."

"I agree," Deno said. Perkins moved to table the discussion until Porter could get some advice on the matter from the League of Oregon Cities. That passed 6-0.

Thompson's words came to fruition as the council was about to adjourn. A citizen

walked in, asked about the social media issue and said there was "a cho-mo" on the street. Council members looked at her with confusion and some asked what she meant.

The term is slang for child molester, and she said she wanted to give the council a description of the man. The council and staff directed her to call the local non-emergency dispatch line.

In other business, the council approved changes to the city's zoning laws and gave librarian Susan Hilliard permission to apply for the annual \$1,000 Ready to Read grant that helps the city's summer reading program.

The council also met in a closed-door session with city attorney David Blanc to discuss possible litigation.

And Corwin announced he might have to step away from the council due to scheduling conflicts with new duties as a junior high football coach. That prompted Moss to ask Corwin to stay on because she may have to leave due to selling her house.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833. Editor's note: Reporter Phil Wright joined the Pilot Rock Community Watch Facebook group Wednesday for news-gathering purposes.

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