



# EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar



Nick Goit, owner of Eastern Oregon Tactical, places a Panther Arms DPMS LR-308 out on display at his shop Tuesday in Hermiston. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

## THE GREAT DIVIDE

In the West, heritage and landscape shape views of guns

By ERIC MORTENSON  
EO Media Group

Hermiston gun shop owner Nick Goit engages almost daily in “open carry,” wearing a holstered pistol on his hip as he walks about town. He said it doesn’t raise eyebrows, although it helps to carry yourself in a professional manner.

“If you see someone coming down the street with a gun, you don’t automatically assume they’re going to shoot things up,” Goit said.

Do that in Portland, however, or Seattle, Eugene or other urban areas, and people would most likely be alarmed. There is an urban-rural divide over firearms that seems every bit as stark as the divisions over farming practices, wildlife, land and water use and natural resources.

With guns, however, the disagreement sharpens in the wake of yet another mass murder, this time the Oct. 1 shooting at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg. Nine people dead, plus the gunman. Nine wounded.

### One issue, two sides

From urban areas, primarily, come the demands for greater gun control. From rural areas, primarily, comes the answer: Leave us alone.

How to cross that divide?

“There’s such a culture clash, I don’t think it can be explained,” said Goit, who opened Eastern Oregon Tactical in Hermiston four years ago. “The opposite culture baffles me.”

Wes Hare says it’s a really tough question.

Hare is city manager of Albany, in



Nick Goit, owner of Eastern Oregon Tactical, puts up a U.S. flag outside of his storefront while opening the shop Tuesday in Hermiston. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Oregon’s Willamette Valley. He started in Ashland, went to high school in Bend, and lived in Eugene, Oakridge and La Grande before Albany. He’s spent plenty of time in Portland and Salem. He guesses the urban-rural divide in Oregon isn’t much different than a lot of other states.

“I think typically the notion is, and I’m sure it’s true, in predominantly rural places people are more concerned about gun rights, more interested in them and more concerned about intrusion” on those rights, Hare said.

Part of that attitude comes from heritage. Many rural Westerners grew up handling guns at relatively young ages. Tap

a current or former country boy of a certain age and he’ll tell you of the single-shot .22 rifle leaning against the wall in the closet. Squirrels beware.

“When I was a kid,” Hare said, “you could go out in the country and shoot a gun, and it wouldn’t cause much of a stir — in part because there weren’t as many people around.”

“If you live on a ranch, who cares if you shoot a gun?” Hare said. “You won’t hit anything.”

Hare had a .22 for plinking and a Winchester .308 for hunting deer. Gun

See GUNS/8A

### PENDLETON

## Council directs city to sell old police station

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

The Pendleton City Council voted Tuesday to try to return the old police station to private hands. At various points a bank, a police station and a Umatilla County office, the council unanimously directed city staff to look into selling the building at 109 S.W. Court St.

After Umatilla County decided not to renew the lease to house its alcohol and drug program, City Manager Robb Corbett determined that there wasn’t any expected use for the property and suggested the city sell it.

Corbett said administrators polled all city departments to see if there were any remaining municipal uses for the building and found two: A water line that connects the building and the Pendleton River Parkway and a police vehicle used to patrol the parkway that is parked at the facility. Both of those issues will need to be resolved before the building can be sold.

Kerns said another issue that will need to be resolved is whether to hire an appraiser to determine the property’s value, which she estimated would cost \$4,000.

Many councilors said that wasn’t necessary. “It doesn’t take rocket science to figure what the market price of that is,” Councilor Tom Young said.

Councilor Al Plute said city staff could deter-

See PENDLETON/8A

## Johnson wants a ‘citizen watchdog committee’

By HILLARY BORRUD  
Capital Bureau

State Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, plans to introduce a bill in 2016 to create a “citizens watchdog committee” to hold state agencies accountable for meeting spending and policy goals.

Johnson said she has been frustrated by state officials whom she accused of misleading lawmakers about how agencies spend money and the progress of major projects, such as the state’s failed Cover Oregon insurance exchange.

“When I watched some of the staff from Cover Oregon come in and just flat fib to the Legislature, I think that’s where an accountability committee could dig in, and I think there ought to be consequences for that,” Johnson said. Some lawmakers felt misled after Cover Oregon officials testified the project was on track, and Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, in January asked a state official to testify under oath on the exchange.

Johnson wants the committee to check whether agencies are sticking to budgets approved by the Legislature and spending money for the purposes

See WATCHDOG/8A



Johnson

### UMATILLA

## Homeless camps along the river disappearing

Hermiston also cracking down on unwanted camps

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

It used to be a community of sorts, a haven for some of Umatilla’s most down and out.

Now the stretch of woods along the Umatilla River between the high school and River Road is quiet. The improvised homeless camp that used to be nestled against the river banks is gone. In its place is a red and white sign proclaiming “No camping,” the

“N” defiantly whited out.

City Manager Bob Ward said the sign is part of the city’s enforcement of an ordinance passed Sept. 1 that banned living in tents inside city limits. After people living near the river were put on notice by the city that they needed to move or be cited, Ward said the camp was abandoned and its tenants seemed to have moved upriver out of the city.

“When they moved out what remained was not a pleasant sight,” he said.

Ward said the city’s public

See CAMPS/8A



A “No Camping” sign marks the entrance to a spot along the Umatilla River near Umatilla High School that used to hold a homeless camp. Staff photo by Jade McDowell

