

COUNCIL: McDonald recommended hiring a public information officer

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Councilor Neil Brown called Plute's street fee plan a "shell game" and said it was a knee-jerk reaction to the gas tax's demise.

City Manager Robb Corbett said the group — him, Patterson and the council — were becoming more "fractured" as a result of infighting.

Corbett suggested the council and staff stick to their original plans, but slow down the process, prioritize projects and educate the public better.

"I think we're doing really good work, I just don't think the public realizes it and we got our butts kicked," he said.

Mayor Phillip Houk said educating the public could be the most difficult part, referencing the 2006 campaign for a long-term 3-cent gas tax.

Houk said the 2006 campaign had more funding, more volunteers and more public outreach, but the tax was still handily defeated at the polls.

Councilor Tom Young said the message from both elections was pretty clear.

"They've told us twice they don't want their roads fixed. So as far as I'm concerned, let the damn thing sit," he said.

Councilor McKennon McDonald was also less than convinced that the public isn't aware of the issues.

"I don't think that its people don't understand the issues we have," she said. "I'm personally in the

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— Councilor Tom Young

camp that they don't like the messengers, they don't like where its coming from, they don't trust us even if they sit down with a department head or with a councilor."

Although she was unsure of how to rebuild that trust, she did recommend the city hire a public information officer.

Although Corbett and McDonald called for a more united front, it wasn't coming together at the workshop.

Young said he was going to oppose the recommended utility rate increases unless there were more protections for people living on fixed incomes.

Regardless of what decisions the council made, some of the attendees at the meeting said there was little chance of avoiding public scrutiny.

"I think the public should know better but they choose not to because we're the villain," Brown said. "We're government."

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POLE: Ceremony included prayers for U.S. veterans

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Umatilla and braille. A plaque notes that the pole is meant to honor veterans and current service members.

"This connects Hermiston with hundreds of thousands of communities across the world in the spirit of peace," Kane said.

Girl Scout Andrea Gispert, 18, said she wasn't in the troop during its original dedication of the peace pole in 2007, but she was happy to be able to help plan the ceremony to relocate the pole to a safer place.

Her sister Sofia Gispert,

also 18, said having a landmark like the peace pole helps "make a town's history."

"I think it's pretty cool that it's got the different languages on it because it's inclusive," she said. "When people see it they will think, 'This is an inclusive community.'"

The dedication ceremony included a speech by Kane, prayers for America's veterans and an English translation of a poem about peace by Chinese poet Lao Tzu.

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SALMON: Did not distinguish between wild and hatchery-raised

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second-best since counting began in 1938. The BPA says about 1.2 million fish have returned to the rivers and their tributaries to spawn.

A series of dams built from the 1930s to the 1960s decimated some of the nation's largest salmon runs on the Columbia-Snake river system. The federal government has spent billions of dollars over the decades to restore salmon runs, some of which are listed as endangered.

Utilities and the BPA have worked to balance the needs of salmon with power production, flood control and other river uses, the BPA said.

"The result has been a significant increase in fish survival and much larger numbers of spawning salmon," the BPA, which markets power from federal dams, said in a press release.

The Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, which represents four Indian tribes that have fishing rights on the river, said the salmon numbers were good news.

"The success of this fall chinook run reflects the region's commitment to healthy salmon runs and the collaborative spirit that has made it possible," said Paul Lumley, executive director of the fish commission.

There was also good news for the fall chinook returning to the Snake River, which were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1992. Thanks to intensive restoration efforts by the Nez Perce Tribe, their numbers have rebounded since they were listed. This year, 59,005 fall

chinook have passed Lower Granite Dam, southwest of Pullman, on their way to spawning grounds. That's the second-largest return ever to that dam.

But salmon advocate Linwood Laughy of Kooskia, Idaho, said the numbers failed to distinguish between wild salmon and hatchery-raised salmon. "The threatened and endangered fish are wild fish," Laughy said.

"They are also trying to suggest that all is well with salmon in the entire Columbia Basin, including wild Snake River fish," Laughy said.

Snake River fall chinook are destined for extinction unless four giant dams on the lower Snake River are breached, to restore the river to its natural flow, Laughy said.

Large numbers of salmon died during their migration to the sea this year because the water in reservoirs behind the Snake River dams became too warm, he said.

VETERANS: 'You have given us prosperity'

Continued from 1A

ships and planes on a day when 2,403 Americans died and eight battleships sank or sustained grave damage. Murdock acknowledged that the footage was difficult to watch.

"War is not something you can sanitize or glamorize," he said. "Those of you who are gathered here today know that more than anyone."

Brigadier General Fred Maiocco spoke of the bond shared by veterans.

"Whether they fought the Taliban in Afghanistan, Ebola in West Africa or wildfire in Washington State, they forever share the same bond," Maiocco said.

Veterans Day, he said, was their day.

"You have given us security. You have given us prosperity. You have given us the greatest nation on earth," Maiocco said.

Maiocco, who is also Hermiston School District Superintendent, asked World War II veterans to stand. Lopez and Flaiz got to their feet along with dozens of others as the applause washed over them.

Pilot Bob Stangier, of Pendleton, shared some reflections of the war. He joined the Air Force at age 18 as a pilot and came home a veteran of 70 missions. He recalled arriving in Italy with other pilots and walking over to their assigned planes — a group of B-25 bombers.

"We'd never seen the B-25. We walked over and



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Robert Stangier of Pendleton reflects on his experiences as a bomber pilot during World War II on Wednesday during a Veterans Day ceremony in Pendleton.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Brig. Gen. Fred Maiocco of Hermiston talks about service in the military during a Veterans Day ceremony on Wednesday in Pendleton.

kicked the tires," Stangier said. "We didn't even know how to get inside."

They learned on the job. The bombers flew in precise patterns and in close prox-

imity to each other.

"We called ourselves bridge busters," Stangier said.

His crews concentrated on bombing railroad and

highway bridges. At night, they would often drop flares to allow the bombardier to see his target.

Wednesday's tribute included the Pendleton Men's Quartet, who sang official songs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard. Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, and Kathleen Cathey, aide to Sen. Ron Wyden, presented Congressional Citations to WWII veterans and widows. Four veterans received quilts sewn by Quilts of Valor volunteers in gratitude for their service.

The event concluded with a free luncheon.

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Push for end to Syria war most serious yet

By BASSEM MROUE
Associated Press

BEIRUT — The international community is mounting its most serious effort yet to end the nearly 5-year-old Syrian war, rallying around a second round of talks in Vienna this weekend amid the emergence of a Russian proposal that calls for early elections.

But the global push for peace so far excludes any of the Syrian players, and experts say any hasty decisions risk leading to even greater bloodshed.

While world leaders seem to be in agreement that the time has come to put an end to the carnage in Syria that has killed more than 250,000 people, there is still no clear roadmap on how to get there.

Still, the stepped up diplomatic activity, coupled with the U.S. decision to send special operation troops into northern Syria — something the Obama administration had long sought to avoid — reflects a new urgency and a shift in dealing with the world's most intransigent conflict.

The Russian proposal calls for drafting a new constitution within 18 months that would be put to a popular referendum and be followed by an early presidential election. But it makes no mention of Syrian President Bashar Assad stepping down during the transition — a key opposition demand and a sticking point in all previous negotiations to end the civil war.

Russia's military intervention in Syria has raised Moscow's profile when it comes to Syria and given Russian President Vladimir Putin a stronger say in how to end the conflict.

"This is really the first serious effort on the part of



SANA via AP
Syrian government troops walk inside the Kweiras air base, east of Aleppo, Syria, Wednesday. Syrian government forces broke a siege imposed by the Islamic State group on the northern military air base of Kweiras since 2013.

the United States and Russia to bridge the divide, to come up with some concrete ideas about the broad contours of a diplomatic settlement," said Fawaz Gerges, a Middle East expert at the London School of Economics.

The divides have narrowed considerably, he said, adding that the Americans and the Russians now seem to see eye-to-eye on restructuring the political system by drafting a new constitution and holding early elections.

The involvement of Russia and Iran, two key allies of Assad, is essential

in any talks on Syria. Iran had been excluded from last year's talks in Switzerland, but attended the talks two weeks ago in Vienna along with its arch regional rival, Saudi Arabia, a key backer of the rebels fighting to topple Assad.

The Syria conflict has turned into a proxy war between regional and international foes, and observers have long said that any attempt to end the fighting will have to come from an agreement between the warring parties' regional backers, who can then strong-arm the groups they

support into making the necessary concessions.

At the initial talks in Vienna on Oct. 30, the U.S., Russia, Iran and more than a dozen other nations agreed to launch a new peace effort involving Syria's government and opposition groups.

The second round on Saturday again excludes the Syrians, and it is not clear yet if the Russian proposal has been coordinated with the Syrian government. The proposal also does not address a mechanism for bringing about a cease-fire ahead of talks.

"The political future of Dr. Bashar Assad should only be decided by the Syrian people in democratic elections," said Iran's deputy foreign minister for Arab and African affairs, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, speaking in Beirut on Wednesday following a visit to Moscow.

But that is easier said than done.

Syrian legislator Sharif Shehadeh, a member of the ruling Baath party, told The Associated Press there will be no presidential vote before Assad's latest term ends in 2021. He added that parliamentary elections are an internal Syrian affair and that it was still too early to hold them.

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