

PILOT ROCK

City bans pot biz

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Pilot Rock became the latest local city to just say no to marijuana businesses. The city council Tuesday night voted 5-0 to ban pot-related businesses from operating withing city limits. The new ordinance went into effect immediately. The was the second reading of the new city law, and the vote went off without discussion. But Pilot Rock citizens, city staff and councilors have debated and chewed over Oregon’s legalization of marijuana in two work sessions, presentations for and against marijuana, a public hearing and a community meeting. Pilot Rock now joins others banning pot businesses, including Athena, Weston, Stanfield, Umatilla, Ukiah and Umatilla County. The council’s real debate of the night was about whether or not to once again give eight city employees a \$25 Christmas bonus check. Councilor Deacon Perkins argued that with the city raising sewer rates for the next three years, city employees should forgo the annual benefit for the same duration. That drew arguments from some of the 11 audience members. John Taylor said no one is giving other Pilot Rock residents an extra \$25, while former city employee Jackie Carey said the council needed to show support for city workers and keep with a tradition going back many years. The council voted 3-2 in favor of the seasonal bonus, with Perkins and Councilor James Hinkle in the minority. More debate ensued about allowing city employees to work half days on Christmas Eve

and New Year’s Eve while receiving holiday pay for the hours off, another tradition the city has done for some time. Councilor Bob Deno said he does not know anyone who receives pay for not working, and Perkins said this is something the city needs to codify in the employee handbook or negotiate without the pressure of the holidays. However, city employees are not unionized. Then Deno, after listening to suggestions from citizens, moved to allow employees to spend holidays as they wish but use vacation time to cover lost hours. That passed 5-0. The council and citizens also discussed the police situation. Pilot Rock’s lone officer is undergoing training for his certification and city is without another cop and a police chief. The small city made a deal with Pendleton to provide 40 hours of police coverage a week and the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office and Oregon State Police are also providing patrols. Some residents said they did not see any police on duty, while other praised the work of Pendleton police Cpl. Ryan Lehnert. Deno said Pilot Rock is receiving better police coverage than ever before. The city and community will discuss this further at a meeting Dec. 14 at 6 p.m. at city hall. And the council also agreed to former officer Gary Thompson’s request for another hearing. The council fired Thompson right after a recent closed-door meeting in which he participated. The new hearing, though, would take place in public. That passed 4-1, with Councilor Ray Doherty the lone vote against. He stated the city was done with this and should move on.

Sen. Bill Hansell draws Milton-Freewater opponent

East Oregonian

An Independent Party candidate from Milton-Freewater is seeking to oust Republican Bill Hansell of Athena from the state Senate. Barb Dickerson filed candidacy paperwork Nov. 30 with the Oregon Secretary of State. She also took to social media to announce she was running. “I am going to run for Sen. Bill Hansell’s Senate seat in November 2016. He is a good man, very accomplished, but I find that he is sitting on the fence so to speak about Measure 11 reform.” Revising Oregon’s voter-approved law that established mandatory

minimum prison sentences for serious felonies has been on Dickerson’s mind since at least spring of 2014 when her husband, Terry Dickerson, 63, pleaded guilty to first-degree sexual abuse and received the mandatory minimum prison sentence of six years, three months. She has talked to Oregon lawmakers, including Hansell, about revising the law she considers fitting for repeat or violent criminals, not first-time offenders. Dickerson also stated in the announcement she wants to protect gun rights, see better education in Oregon and is against the Common Core teaching standards. She also asked people to sign an online petition supporting her candidacy.

Old Stanfield High School up for sale

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The old Stanfield High School is on the market, but Stanfield city councilors don’t think the city should buy it. Kal Garton of Garton & Associates, Pendleton, told councilors at their Tuesday meeting that he had listed the school for sale and had spoken with potential buyers, but he thought the “highest and best use” for it would be a city-owned community center. “What I want to do is just plant a seed and then come back,” he said, handing out packets of details about the school. The four-acre property and 4,700-square-foot building are listed for \$750,000. Garton said a church had expressed interest in turning the building into a homeless shelter, the Horizon Project was looking into turning it into housing for the intellectually disabled and the Department of Veterans Affairs had looked at it too. Councilor Jack Huxoll

said he thought the building was in too poor a condition and too expensive for the city to even consider buying. “That building’s been there a lot of years,” he said. “I want to school there. I don’t think the city should have anything to do with it.” Garton said the ground floor of the school had been remodeled and work had been done on the plumbing and electrical systems. The asbestos on the first floor had been abated, while most of the asbestos upstairs had been encapsulated. He said there was lead paint upstairs but it wouldn’t be hard to take care of. Councilor Pam McSpadden said even if the

PENDLETON

Outdoor School building gets upgrade

Asbestos tiles removed from bunkhouse

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

Asbestos flooring has been removed from Corporation Bunkhouse, the approximately 50-year-old building that houses female students during Pendleton Outdoor School on the Umatilla National Forest. The Rotary Club of Pendleton and InterMountain Education Service District collaborated to remove asbestos floor tiles from the building. Though the tiles were not considered a health hazard, the project was considered a priority for forest officials. “We have a backlog on the forest of facilities that have asbestos flooring we would like to have removed, but because of requirements for removal with licensed contractors and their availability, we have not been able to take action,” said Jeff Bloom, recreation specialist with the Walla Walla Ranger District. Rotary donated \$1,500 to the \$4,188 project. The IMESD, which has a permit with the Forest Service to operate Outdoor School, footed the remainder of the bill. The district contracted with Tektoniks Corp. of Walla



Photos contributed by Michele Madril

Tile flooring containing asbestos (left) was recently removed to reveal the original Douglas fir wood floor (right) at Corporation Bunkhouse, which houses female students for Pendleton Outdoor School on the Umatilla National Forest.

Walla to remove and dispose of 360 square feet of tile and mastic that was put down sometime in the 1970s. Once the tile was gone, it brought the building’s original Douglas fir wood floor back to the surface. “We knew the hardwood was there, but didn’t know how the removal would go or what the results would be,” said Rich Long with the IMESD facilities maintenance department. “I was in awe of how great the floor looked.” This spring, Long and volunteers will sand and refinish the floor. Zimmerman True Value Hardware in Pendleton will donate the floor finish. Jim Krout, a Pendleton Rotarian for nearly 30 years, said the club took on Outdoor School as a community project years ago, encouraged by IMESD Superintendent Mark Mulvihill. Since then, Rotary has donated \$1,500 each year for various projects. Krout said the asbestos abatement project would not have happened without a grant from Rotary District

5100. “We have members in their 50s and 60s, some of whom probably attended Outdoor School and some who went as counselors, so we see it as worthwhile,” Krout said. Outdoor School has operated continuously in Pendleton since 1971 along Buck Creek in the national forest. Corporation Bunkhouse was likely built in the mid- to early 1960s. Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

Churches create Bethlehem village

By TAMMY MALGESINI
Community Editor

The framework of a village from Biblical times was erected over the weekend as Journey to Bethlehem returns for the holiday season. The interactive tour depicts what it may have been like during the time of Jesus’ birth. Presented by Hermiston and Anchor Point Seventh-day Adventist churches, it features the sights, sounds and smells of 2,000 years ago, said Sheila Botti. The free 20-30 minute guided tours are Friday through Sunday from 5-8:30 p.m. behind the Hermiston Seventh-day Adventist Church, 855 W. Highland Ave. Around 100 costumed actors participate in the dramatic production. In addition, there are people who take care of logistics, provide musical entertainment while guests wait for their guide and serve refreshments for visitors after taking the journey. “This is the true meaning of what Christmas is — the birth of Jesus,” Botti said. “It’s not all about shopping and the gifts and Santa.” The production has become more streamlined since it started in 2008, Botti said. However, the past



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Larry Hanson works by a newly constructed building that will house Gamaliel for this weekend’s Journey to Bethlehem at the Hermiston Seventh-day Adventist Church.

seven seasons have taken a toll on the village and props. The tent structures, tattered over time, are being replaced with semi-permanent structures, said Judi Hanson. The churches, who don’t charge admission or accept donations, have put on the production as a gift to the community. With operating expenses of around \$3,000, Botti said the event’s steering committee decided to solicit financial support to make needed improvements for this season. “We did an informal shout out to the community asking if anyone wanted to give back to Journey to Bethlehem,” Botti said. “We were able to get enough and because of that we are able to do it this year.” The authenticity of the tour, Hanson said, provides an experience that reaches out to people beyond just reading the Biblical account or attending a regular living Nativity. “It’s an amazing tour, it makes you feel like you’re right there in a real village,” she said. “The detail in the little shops is amazing.” Featuring more than a dozen shops, walking through the village provides a feast for the senses. The wafting odor comprised of straw, perfumes and animals adds to the experience. In addition, food being prepared in the fires provides the smell of baking bread and roasting chicken. “For the tour, you really feel like you’re going back 2,000 years,” Botti said. “We try really hard to make it authentic with the energy of the village.” In the future, the steering committee would like to lay asphalt along the path to make it less rugged and more accessible, Botti said. They did purchase an all-terrain wheelchair, however it likely won’t arrive in time for the 2015 season, she said. Assistants are available to help in maneuvering wheelchairs and strollers, as needed. “We have regular wheelchairs and people that will help push wheelchairs through,” Botti said. “It’s hard because it’s just soft dirt, but it’s possible.” For more information, call 541-567-9000. Contact Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539

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