

PENDLETON

After postponement, council to vote on street fee

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

In early January, Public Works Director Bob Patterson said, “2015 could be the biggest year on record for public works.”

While that metric is hard to quantify, it certainly was eventful.

In a year where infrastructure maintenance absorbed much of the Pendleton City Council’s attention, its only fitting that the last council meeting of the year, on Tuesday, will see Pendleton’s governing body decide on a \$5 street utility fee.

The council was set to make a decision on the fee in November, until Councilor Jane Hill convinced a majority of the council to postpone the decision to give the city more time to inform the public on the new fee.

How much will it cost?	
Water line size	Monthly fee
¾ inch	\$5
1 inch	\$8.50
1 ½ inch	\$16.50
2 inch	\$26.50
3 inch	\$53.50
4 inch	\$83.50
6 inch	\$166.50
8 inch	\$400

Source: City of Pendleton

Hill and other city officials have spent that time spreading the word through the media, including a widely distributed op-ed written by Hill that details the specifics of the fee.

Water customers with a three-quarter inch line will pay an extra \$5 per month on their utility bill.

The fee increases based on the size of your line — a customer with a 1-inch line pays \$7.50 a month, 1.5 inch lines pay \$16.50, with the rate structure accounting for water lines as large as 8 inches.

Since many homes are supplied with a three-quarter inch line, most residents will pay only the \$5 fee.

According to Hill’s op-ed, 86 percent of water meters are three-quarters of an inch and 9 percent are 1 inch, with the number of larger meters dramatically dwindling after that.

Each year, the fee will rise by either 2.5 percent or a percentage determined by the Engineering News Record Construction Cost Index, whichever one is higher.

City staff estimate the revenue generated by the utility fee will bring in \$481,000 per year for much

needed road repairs.

The city’s funding formula allocates 70 percent of fee revenues toward upkeep of Pendleton’s better maintained residential roads, while 30 percent will go toward the worst.

In the first two years of the fee, city officials estimate as many as 44 street segments could be fixed with the additional revenue.

If the council doesn’t approve the utility fee Tuesday, it won’t get another shot at instituting the fee until April, when the city will have finished its transition to a new financial software.

Passing the utility fee will end the year for a council that’s seen plenty of peaks and valleys in their dealings with the city’s infrastructure issues.

Over dozens of meetings, the council seriously considered the

utility fee, a gas tax, a bond for a new fire station and other facility maintenance, system development charges, water and sewer rate hikes and a new utility charge for storm-water drainage.

To date, only the water and sewer rates have been passed and are in effect.

The gas tax was put on the November ballot and was handily defeated while the bond, system development charges and storm-water utility were postponed until at least 2016.

The meeting will be at the council chambers in city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Avenue, Tuesday at 7 p.m.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

Santa bikers deliver toys to hospital

East Oregonian

A group of enthusiastic bikers recently delivered Christmas cheer to Good Shepherd Medical Center.

Kelly Sanders, vice president of human services at Good Shepherd Health Care System, and Nick Bejarano, director of marketing and communications, greeted 121 riders on 89 motorcycles during the Dec. 5 Echo Toy Run.

The hospital employees were overwhelmed by the amount of toy donations given by the bikers. They will be used throughout the medical setting to spread holiday cheer to children that may be in the hospital this holiday season.

Sanders thanked the bikers for their contributions and for braving the cold and wet weather conditions in support of the 12th annual event.

The Echo Toy Run is organized by community member Al Sells, who has a passion for making sure chil-



Nearly 100 motorcycles depart from Echo’s Main Street during the Dec. 5 Echo Toy Run. The bikers delivered presents to Good Shepherd Medical Center.

dren in the hospital during the holidays know that people in the community are encouraging them to get better.

To see more photos from the event, visit the hospital’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/goodshcs.

Local United Way seeing donation increase after cuts

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

As the end of 2015 quickly approaches, United Way of Umatilla and Morrow County has raised \$95,352 so far this year.

Executive director Cricket Nicholson said it’s hard to tell exactly how much money will come in over the rest of this year’s campaign, but she thinks that the total will be higher than last year when all is said and done.

“Workplaces are up a little bit, and some are up a lot,” she said.

In March Nicholson had to tell 10 public agencies that they were not getting money from United Way’s community impact fund after only \$137,000 was donated during the fall 2014 campaign compared to \$202,181 in 2013 and \$306,732 in 2011. She said she heard from plenty of people about the cuts to agencies like the Salvation Army’s meal program, but the bottom line is United Way can’t give out money it doesn’t have.

This year some workplaces are stepping up their donations, she said. Pendleton Woolen Mills nearly doubled its contribution, while the Hermiston Bi-Mart and Columbia Forest Productions also gave significantly more.

“I would encourage

people to continue to be generous,” she said.

About \$71,000 of this year’s donations have come from workplace donations, while about \$10,600 have been sent in through the mail. The rest of the money has been from corporate donations or state employees.

Nicholson said some people are under the impression that the money donated locally goes to the national United Way organization, but everything donated through United Way of Umatilla and Morrow County stays local unless a donor specifically asks that it be sent elsewhere. People can designate their donation to a specific nonprofit of their choosing or they can give to the community impact fund to be divided among grants to various local agencies.

“Our sole purpose is to raise the funds needed by those agencies,” Nicholson said. “A lot of them are small and can’t afford to do the fundraising we can do. We can also get into the workplace easier.”

For more information about United Way visit www.umatillamorrowunit-edway.org or call 541-276-2661.

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

HERMISTON

Online rumors of violence worry parents

Police investigation confirmed no such threat took place

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Social media fueled panic among parents in Hermiston Thursday night after rumors began swirling on Facebook and Twitter of an alleged threat to “shoot up” Hermiston High School.

But Briana Cortaberria, Hermiston School District communications officer, said investigation by Hermiston Police Department confirmed that no such threat ever took place.

“Everything got blown out of proportion,” she said.

Cortaberria said the rumors stemmed from a comment that a student overheard another student make to someone else following a physical altercation at the high school. Through a “game of telephone,” she said, the rumor mill turned the comment into a threat about a school shooting.

“It was nothing like that,” she said. “Nothing of that nature.”

Once a student posted about the supposed threat on Facebook, however,

people began calling the police department. Law enforcement worked with district administrators in tracking down the origin of the rumor and speaking to the student who had supposedly made the threat and those who heard what the student said.

Cortaberria said the school district wouldn’t have opened its doors Friday morning if the administration or law enforcement had any concerns.

“Our first priority is student safety,” she said.

However, a post on the district’s Facebook page Thursday night, meant to calm parent fears, concerned some parents who hadn’t heard of any possible threat.

The post, which appeared at 9 p.m. Thursday, said, “Hermiston High School administration has been made aware of an alleged threat. With the assistance of the Hermiston Police Department, the claim was confirmed to be false. There is no reason you should have concern in sending your student to school tomorrow.”

It was shared 176 times and more than 200 comments were posted underneath. Many people

asked for more information and wanted to know how the district could be sure there was no danger. Several parents said they would keep their children home from school.

Tracy Gammell was one of the parents who commented on the post Thursday night, asking the district to post more information after starting “a pretty big panic” among parents.

She said she ended up sending her children to school on Friday, but only after calling and talking to an administrator.

“I was concerned by the Facebook post from the district,” she said. “I felt it was probably meant to calm people, but that it had the opposite effect and really startled parents because of the lack of information provided.”

Cortaberria said at the time she and district administrators felt it was better to post something “short and sweet” to address rumors already swirling.

“There is a fine line of what can be shared for privacy reasons and with police matters,” she said.

However, she did post an updated news release

with more detail on Friday morning.

“In today’s climate, this type of social media situation can be expected,” the post read. “The positive side is that, had there been any merit to the claims, we would have been able to act accordingly and respond appropriately to ensure student, staff, and patron safety. Unfortunately, it can also work against us when the accusations made are false and unfounded.”

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

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Foot Notes - Orthotic Devices

Bill has been feeling lower-back pain for a month. A weightlifter, Bill thought he could alleviate the pain by curtailing his heavy squats. It didn't help. Chris, a cyclist, decided to get more serious about his training. He had no trouble increasing his distances, but now he's mystified by persistent shin pain.

Joan, who takes aerobics classes four times a week, feels pain in one heel at the beginning of each class, but doesn't take it seriously because it gradually lessens as the hour passes.

Three athletes, three sports, three complaints, all of which may have one solution: orthotic devices.

Properly called orthoses, orthotic devices are removable shoe inserts, custom-molded of various materials, designed to correct a foot misalignment, deformity or dysfunction.

Orthotic devices perform functions that make standing, walking and running more comfortable and efficient, by altering slightly the angles at which feet strike a walking or running surface.

Doctors of podiatric medicine prescribe the use of orthoses as conservative approaches to many foot problems: their use is a highly successful, practical treatment form. The aim is to improve foot function and minimize stress forces that could otherwise cause foot deformities, which have been traced to many back, hip and knee problems.

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Have your say on the next 10 years of trail planning in Oregon.

A draft of the document *Oregon Trails 2015: A Vision For The Future* is posted online at <http://tinyurl.com/o3lvfah> for a month of public review. The plan has information and recommendations to guide planning on the following types of trails:

- Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) trails
- Snowmobile trails
- Trails for hiking, mountain biking and other non-motorized trail recreation
- Water trails

OPRD will accept comments until January 5, 2016. Responses can be made via:

- <http://tinyurl.com/o3lvfah>
- Email comments to Terry Bergerson at terry.bergerson@oregon.gov
- Mail comments to Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, 725 Summer Street NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301-1271, Attn: Terry Bergerson

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) developed the plan using public feedback from throughout the state. OPRD is required to develop a trails plan to be eligible for matching federal grants.