



**BLUEWOOD
TO OPEN
FRIDAY
REGION/3A**



**VIKINGS
BEAT
ROCKETS
BASKETBALL/1B**



**LA closes
all schools
after threat
NATION/8A**

EAST OREGONIAN

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2015

140th Year, No. 44 WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD One dollar

PILOT ROCK

Fired cop addresses council

Thompson denies he lied to city, asks to be able to resign

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Pilot Rock city staff revealed Tuesday that the city council fired officer Gary Thompson for lying.

But the former police officer is not done with the city — and the city may be stuck dealing with him, too.

The city council voted 5-0 on Nov. 10 to fire Thompson after a closed-door meeting between him and the council. Thompson then submitted a request for a hearing before the council. The council agreed to the unusual move and set the date for Tuesday night before the regular council meeting.

But this would be in front of the public. More than 15 Pilot Rock residents came to witness the meeting that lasted less than 15 minutes.

Thompson arrived with his new wife, Valoree Thompson, and his attorney, Michael Breiling of Pendleton. Thompson stayed silent, but his lawyer said the city code lacks a disciplinary process. And he asserted the city did not give Thompson notice of termination, nor present him with evidence for what led to the loss of his job. Breiling said Thompson was willing to resign his position and release the city from further obligation.

Breiling said the firing sparks an automatic investigation from the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, which could lead to the revocation of Thompson's police certification. A resignation, though, might allow him to continue with a career in law enforcement.

Councilor Bob Deno asked Breiling if he knew why the council fired Thompson. Breiling said it had to do with a disagreement over spending money on activity booklets Thompson could give to children.

But the council said that was not the reason.

"The reason for his termination is that he lied," Porter stated. "He was dishonest."

Porter said Thompson denied ordering the booklets when she asked him about them, even though the vendor provided a recording of Thompson placing the order. Porter also said that, before city council voted to terminate the police officer, one councilor asked Thompson if he was willing to resign — and he declined.

Porter said the city already provided Public Safety Standards and Training with the notice of Thompson's firing. She said the city would talk to its attorney, David Blanc of Pendleton, and get back to Breiling. Blanc was not at the meeting.

Afterward, Breiling denied Thompson lied and said Porter has a personal grudge against the man. He said he hoped they could reach a resolution with the city, and if not, there could be a lawsuit.

PENDLETON

Council approves utility fee

Flat \$5 tax goes into effect immediately

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

More than a year after residents of Southwest Perkins Avenue petitioned the city to fix their street, Pendleton City Council approved a utility fee that could fix as many as 44 street segments over the next two years — including the crumbling Perkins.

While city officials had originally planned to institute a graduating scale based on meter size, they delayed that implementation until April 1 while the city transitions between financial software. Until then, all customers will pay a flat \$5. The fee goes into effect immediately.

Starting in 2017, the fee will rise annually each April. The increase will be based on the Engineering News Record Construction Cost Index or a 2.5 percent increase, whichever is greater.

Resident Rick Rohde said the rate adjustment should be based on increases to Social Security income, which he considered the index that mattered most to vulnerable ratepayers.

While noting that construction costs aren't connected to Social Security, Councilor Jane

See **PENDLETON/10A**



More online
For video of the city council meeting visit eastoregonian.com

Eastern Oregon leaders make statewide pitch



Mark Mulvihill, George Murdock and Kevin Campbell (from left to right) field questions Monday afternoon after their presentation on embedding wellness services in schools. The men spoke at the Oregon Leadership Summit at the Oregon Convention Center.

‘The big idea’

Wellness hubs bring health professionals into schools

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

Ask Mark Mulvihill, Kevin Campbell and George Murdock to color inside the lines and they might give you a blank stare.

Mulvihill is superintendent of the InterMountain Education Service District, Campbell is CEO of the Eastern Oregon Community Care Organization and Murdock is a Umatilla County commissioner. These guys often think outside their own particular silos, sharing people and dollars to pull off what they call “the big idea.”

The trio spoke Monday at the Oregon Leadership Convention at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland about the latest big idea to come from Northeast Oregon — wellness hubs.

Wellness hubs, they said, will improve student success by bringing health services into Umatilla County schools. Each hub would be made up of several schools and include nurses, dental professionals and mental health counselors. Counselors were embedded in Umatilla County schools more than a year ago. The wellness hubs also build on an existing wraparound program that

“A lot of kids enter school having never been to a dentist. They are in pain. They can't concentrate. It affects mental health and behavior.”

— **Cathy Wamsley**, IMESD Oral Health Project Coordinator

directly supports at-risk families in the county.

Dental professionals will screen for cavities and apply fluoride varnishes and sealants. Nurses will provide urgent care,

See **HEALTH/10A**



World War II veteran William Jones, at left, sits with his niece Emily Mellick at her home recently in Hermiston. The offices of U.S. Representative Greg Walden and Senator Ron Wyden have said they will help Jones get the medals he was awarded during his time in the service.

HERMISTON

WWII veteran to finally receive missing medals

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

A World War II veteran is going to get the medals he was promised 70 years ago.

After William Jones, 92, of Hermiston, appeared in the *East Oregonian* last week, his niece Emily Mellick said she was contacted by Rep. Greg Walden's office who told her he would make sure Jones got any medals and ribbons he had earned. Sen. Ron Wyden's office also reached out with an offer of help.

"I was shocked," Mellick said. Starting in 1943 at age 19,

See **VETERAN/10A**

Jones served as an Army Air Force ordnance worker at an airbase in southern Italy, loading bombs onto B-24 planes. He returned to the United States in 1945 in preparation for a new assignment in the Pacific, but before the Army could ship him out again the war ended.

When Jones moved in with Mellick last year, she said she had enjoyed learning about his service and was surprised to learn that some of the medals listed in his honorable discharge papers had never been sent to him. She decided to work on getting them

