

Umatilla County sends fire district merger to voters

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Voters in Hermiston and Stanfield will get again have the opportunity to vote on merging their fire districts.

Stanfield voters in November 2014 approved the plan for a new district, but Hermiston voters did not.

Umatilla County Board of Commissioners last Wednesday voted 3-0 to start the formation of Umatilla County Fire District No. 1 to replace the Hermiston and Stan-

field districts. The process includes a public hearing on the new district Jan. 20 at 9 a.m. at the Umatilla County Courthouse, Pendleton.

This time out the tax rate is \$1.75 per \$1,000 of assessed value, lower than the previous proposal. Scott Stanton, chief for the Hermiston and Stanfield fire districts, told commissioners that public safety on the west side of Umatilla County is at risk in the current formation.

"We don't have enough people," he said. "We don't have enough funding to replace our capital needs, such as fire engines, cardiac

monitors and ambulances."

Hermiston provides ambulance service to four cities and operates the regional hazardous materials team for six counties. The district will not run out of money, Stanton said, but cuts to services could come as soon as 2017.

Stanton also told commissioners the new permanent tax rate would mean the larger district would not have to go out for bonds for capital or equipment improvements.

Just like in 2014, voters would need to pass measures to dissolve both districts and then approve a

measure to form and fund the new district. Residents of the Hermiston Fire District currently pay a tax rate of \$1.20 per \$1,000. Stanton explained in an email that residents in the city limits would not see any tax increase, because of compression. The city of Hermiston, though, would lose money while the fire district would receive about \$900,000 in additional funds.

Citizens outside both cities would see an increase of 55 cents, which amounts to \$55 per \$100,000 in assessed value or approximately \$4.58 per month.

Citizens in Stanfield pay \$2.06 per \$1,000, so they would see a small decrease.

(An *East Oregonian* story that ran Dec. 16 used inaccurate tax figures.)

"When all is said and done," said Stanton, "All citizens will pay \$1.75 per \$1,000 towards the new fire district. This will still be the cheapest rate for fire departments our size throughout the state."

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

BRIEFLY

Storm gusts peak at 71 mph in Pendleton

PENDLETON — High winds Monday exceeded 60 mph throughout Umatilla County and led to the closure of part of Interstate 84.

The National Weather Service at the Pendleton airport reported a gust there of 71 mph, while Hermiston's airport had a 65 mph gust and winds north of Helix peaked at 67 mph.

The gusts were strongest around 5 p.m., about the same time wind blew down a tree at Southeast 12th Street and Byers Avenue, Pendleton, near Washington Elementary School. The tree took down power lines when it fell, according to eyewitnesses.

Other Pendleton neighborhoods also reported wind damage, including a pine tree blocking part of Southwest Olson Avenue.

The Oregon Department of Transportation during the evening shut down I-84 from Hermiston to La Grande due to the winds. The state reported all highways were flowing again by Tuesday morning.

Faith Lutheran sets candlelight service

PENDLETON — A special Christmas Eve service is being hosted by Faith Lutheran Church.

The public is invited to the candlelight service, which is Thursday at 7 p.m. in the Oregon Trail Room at Red Lion, 304 S.E. Nye Ave., Pendleton. Led by Rev. David Nelson, the service will celebrate the birth of Jesus with the singing of hymns, Christmas carols and scripture readings.

Following the program, a time of fellowship will include coffee, cookies and refreshments.

Faith Lutheran Church meets each Sunday at the Red Lion with a Bible study at 9 a.m. and worship at 10:30 a.m. For more information, call Bob Wright at 541-276-6549.

IMAC serves breakfast fundraiser

IRRIGON — The Irrigon Multicultural Arts Center committee is offering a hearty breakfast.

The fundraiser is Saturday from 7:30-10:30 a.m. at Stokes Landing Senior Center, 195 N.W. Opal Place, Irrigon. The cost is \$4.50 per person.

The group of volunteers is raising money in hopes of preserving Irrigon's 1921 school building. For more information, call Peggy at 541-567-3806.

Recreation classes begin in January

PENDLETON — A pair of classes that help with flexibility are offered through Pendleton Parks & Recreation.

Stretching, which helps to improve balance and posture, is offered Mondays and Wednesdays from 5:30-6:30 p.m., beginning Jan. 4. The three-week session meets at the Pendleton Recreation Center, 510 S.W. Dorion Ave.

A yoga class also will begin after the new year. The three-week session runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:15-6:30 p.m. at the recreation center.

The session starts Jan. 5. The registration fee for each class is \$40 and is due by Wednesday, Dec. 30. Also, there's a drop-in fee of \$9 for those who don't register.

To register, go to www.pendletonparksandrec.com or stop by the parks office, 865 Tutuilla Road. For more information, call 541-276-8100.

Library displays Jewish immigrant exhibit

ATHENA — People in the area can view some historical and cultural information about "A Year in the Life of Oregon Jewish Immigrants."

The Athena Public Library made arrangements to borrow a traveling trunk display from the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education in Portland. Among the items are a 1907 passport, a 1920 United States Citizen Certificate and a dreidel.

The exhibit will be on display now through January at the library, 418 E. Main St., Athena.

For more information, contact Library Director Carrie Bremer at 541-566-2470 or athenalibrary@cityofathena.com.

Morrow County Fair seeks board members

HEPPNER — The Morrow County Fair has two vacant openings

The board meets once a month, rotating the meetings between Heppner and Boardman.

For more information, call Ann Jones at 541-676-9474.

Hospice offers grief materials

HERMISTON — A library featuring grief-related materials for adults, children, medical professionals and pastors is available at Vange John Memorial Hospice.

People can check out books and other publications for up to one month. The hospice office is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 645 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston.

For more information, call 541-667-3543.

Tax program needs volunteers

With tax season right around the corner, volunteers are needed for the AARP tax aide program.

People will assist in providing free tax preparation in Umatilla and Morrow counties. All necessary training and equipment will be provided to volunteers. Not all positions require computer or tax knowledge.

The training is planned in January and assistance is provided February through April 14.

For more information or to register for training materials, call Vivian at 541-567-8054 or Joan at 541-567-8034.

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

MISSION



Winners from ArtWORKz 2015 show off their certificates from the youth art show and competition at Tamastlikt Cultural Institute. Entries for the 2016 show are being accepted through Jan. 18.

Youth art show seeks entries

East Oregonian

Budding youth artists are invited to submit original artwork for ArtWORKz 2016, an upcoming art show and competition. Those under the age of 19 from throughout the region are encouraged to participate. Open to both tribal and non-tribal youths, the show will be on exhibit Jan. 23 through Feb. 27 in the gallery at Tamastlikt Cultural Institute, located near Wildhorse Resort & Casino in Mission.

Only one piece of art may be submitted for the competition. The show is open to individuals and groups of collaborating artists. All forms of art media are acceptable and any discipline of artwork, including traditional tribal work such as beadwork, weaving and parfeche painting.

Submissions must be received at Tamastlikt by Monday, Jan. 18. There is no entry fee.

"This art show and competition has grown every

year and the caliber of art is incredible," said Randall Melton, collections curator.

The young artists, Melton said, are excited to display their artwork in a true gallery setting. Last year's event featured more than 90 talented artists competing in the age groups.

The show will be judged by recognized professional artists. Awards will be presented during the Artists' Reception Saturday, Feb. 6 at 1 p.m. at the cultural institute.

There are three age

categories: 10 and under, 11-14 and 15-18. Artists will compete for grand prize, awards of excellence, awards of merit, honorable mentions, best emerging artist and an artists' choice, voted on by those in the show.

An information sheet and entry forms are available at www.tamastlikt.org/exhibits.cfm. For more information, contact Randy Melton at 541-429-7720 or randall.melton@tamastlikt.org.

Search and rescue locates stranded travelers

East Oregonian

Umatilla County Search and Rescue helped a Washington couple who took a detour Monday and found themselves stuck in the snow.

Zachary Rich, 19, and Amanda Ruhnke, 18, from Snohomish, Washington, were traveling through Umatilla County on their way to Wyoming for the holidays, according to a written statement from the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office. They planned to stop in Idaho for the night before finishing their trip, but road and weather conditions prompted the closure of Interstate 84. The pair then followed a GPS route that took a detour

through Pilot Rock and onto East Birch Creek Road, until their Toyota RAV4 became stuck in the snow near Indian Lake.

Ruhnke called Umatilla County Dispatch at 2:29 p.m., according to the sheriff's office daily bulletin, and reported their location about halfway between Pilot Rock and Highway 224.

Patrols searched but could not find the couple or their vehicle, the sheriff's office reported, so at about 5 p.m. the search and rescue team headed out. Team members used snowmobiles to travel the roads, and at around 10 p.m. they found Ruhnke and Rich inside the vehicle.

They were unharmed and brought to

safety.

Winter can be a risky time for travel throughout the Northwest. The sheriff's office urged travelers to check road and weather conditions before taking a trip, and if conditions are bad, allow plenty of time and drive with caution. Bring water, food, blankets and other emergency supplies, the sheriff's office suggested, and make sure gas tanks are full and cell phones are charged.

You can visit www.tripcheck.com to see road closures and other alerts from the Oregon Department of Transportation, and you can find regional weather information from the National Weather Services at <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/>.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 23
CREDIT PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL, 7:30-9 a.m., Shari's, 319 S.E. Nye Ave., Pendleton. (LaFrance Grubbs 541-276-5318).

WILLOW RUN LADIES GOLF CLUB, 8 a.m., rain or shine at the Willow Run Golf Course, Boardman. Participants do not need to be a member to play with the club. (541-481-4381).

ALTRUSA INTERNATIONAL OF PENDLETON, 12 noon program meeting, Red Lion Hotel, 304 S.E. Nye Ave., Pendleton.

CAY-UMA-WA TOASTMASTERS, 12 noon-1 p.m., Wildhorse Casino & Resort Birch boardroom, 46510 Wildhorse Blvd., Pendleton. Everyone welcome.

HERMISTON KIWANIS CLUB, 12 noon, Desert Lanes restaurant conference room, 1545 N. First St., Hermiston. (Doug Barak 541-567-6728).

FRIENDS OF THE IRRIGON LIBRARY, 6 p.m., Irrigon Fire Sta-

tion, 705 N. Main St., Irrigon.
OREGON GRASS ROOTS CRIBBAGE CLUB NO. 2, 6:30 p.m., Desert Lanes Bowling Alley, 1545 N. First St., Hermiston. All levels of players welcome. (541-567-6594).

UMATILLA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD, 6 p.m., chamber office, 100 Cline Ave., Umatilla. (541-922-4825).

MILTON-FREEWATER JAY-CEES BOARD, 6:30 Elks Lodge, 611 N. Main St.

PENDLETON EAGLES AUXILIARY AND AERIE MEETINGS, 7 p.m., Pendleton Eagles Lodge #28, 426 S. Main St., Pendleton.

THURSDAY, DEC. 24
TUMBLEWEED TOASTMASTERS, 6:45 a.m., Conference Room 3&4, Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. Visitors welcome. (541-567-4349).

ARTS AND CRAFTS FROM THE DRY SIDE, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

basement of Assembly of God Church, 730 East Hurlbut Ave., Hermiston. Use the Seventh Street entrance. (541-567-4446).

UMATILLA DOG WALKING CLUB, 10 a.m., 630 Switzer St. at the dog wash in front of Umatilla High School.

ALTRUSA INTERNATIONAL OF HERMISTON, 12 noon, ARC of Umatilla County, 215 W. Orchard Ave.

CONDON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, 12 noon, Courthouse, 221 S. Oregon St.

HEPPNER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, 12 noon, Heppner City Hall, 111 N. Main St.

HERMISTON LINEBACKER CLUB, 12 noon to 1 p.m., Desert Lanes, 1545 N. First St., Hermiston. Hear HHS football coach David Faeteete discuss last week's game and talk about the upcoming tilt. RSVP by Wednesday at 3 p.m. to 541-567-5215. Cost is \$11 for members, \$13 for non-members.

HERMISTON ROTARY CLUB, 12 noon, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church Parish Hall, Fifth Street and Locust Ave.

PENDLETON KIWANIS CLUB, 12 noon, venue varies, Pendleton. Guests welcome. ((541-278-5785).

PENDLETON LIONS CLUB, 12 noon, Roosters Restaurant, 1515 Southgate, Pendleton.



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