

SEAPORT: Contract with Pendleton ends Dec. 31

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medium dogs and the medium dogs take from the small dogs,” he said.

SeaPort officials assured Chrisman that Pendleton would not be one of the routes dropped to the downsizing, and the airline’s four weekday flights and two weekend flights have continued undisturbed.

Air service is made possible by the federal government, which pays SeaPort \$1.8 million to subsidize flights between Pendleton and Portland.

In the wake of the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978, Congress passed legislation that established the Essential Air Service program, which provides subsidies to airlines that provide service from small towns to metro airports.

Pendleton was one of the original communities to benefit from the act, and various airlines have contracted with the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide service. SeaPort took over the contract in 2008.

Although the contract is between SeaPort and the federal government, the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport and the city have a large financial stake in SeaPort’s performance.

The department of transportation allows the city to assess a passenger facility charge — a \$4.50 fee on each ticket SeaPort sells. That often brings in income of \$1,700 a month, which the city uses as a match for federal grants.

Additionally, Chrisman said the airport automatically gets a \$1 million grant from the federal government if more than 10,000 passengers board in Pendleton in a year. If it does not reach that mark, the airport receives \$150,000.

According to the Federal Aviation Administration, Pendleton had 4,015 boardings in 2015, the lowest level since 2009.

Both the city and SeaPort have a strong incentive to keep boardings from sinking too low. If passenger boardings



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The flight crew of a SeaPort flight prepares for departure on Thursday at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton.

fall below an average of 10 per day, the department of transportation can kick the airport out of the Essential Air Service program and strip it of its subsidy.

Pendleton averaged 11 boardings per day in 2014.

Chrisman thinks SeaPort hasn’t marketed its services to their full potential and is urging the airline to revive a bulk ticket sales program, which it could advertise to businesses and government agencies that require frequent employee trips to Portland and the Willamette Valley.

“It’s better to kill a thousand birds with one stone than onesies or twosies,” he said.

More passenger boardings would be a welcome development for the airport, which has long struggled to generate revenue.

At a city council meeting Tuesday, the city’s auditor pointed out the more than \$2 million the airport has accrued in debt as a recurring issue.

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

BRIEFLY

Drug exec takes the Fifth on Capitol Hill, angers lawmakers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Infuriating members of Congress, a smirking Martin Shkreli took the Fifth at a Capitol Hill hearing Thursday when asked about his jacking up of drug prices, then promptly went on Twitter and insulted his questioners as “imbeciles.”

The brash, 32-year-old entrepreneur who has been vilified as the new face of pharmaceutical-industry greed was summoned by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, which is investigating soaring prices for critical medicines.

Four times, he intoned: “On the advice of counsel, I invoke my Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination and respectfully decline to answer your question.”

Lawmakers erupted. Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, the top Democrat on the committee, all but told Shkreli to wipe the smile off his face.

“I call this money blood money ... coming out of the pockets of hardworking Americans,” he said as Shkreli sat through the lecture.



World pledges \$10B for Syrians, but peace prospects bleak

LONDON (AP) — World leaders pledged more than \$10 billion Thursday to help fund schools, shelter and jobs for refugees from Syria’s civil war, money that British Prime Minister David Cameron said “will save lives, will give hope, will give people the chance of a future.”

But participants at the aid conference in London acknowledged that prospects for ending the conflict have rarely been worse: Peace talks are suspended, fighting is intensifying, Russia and the West are at odds, and millions of Syrians are suffering from bombardment, homelessness and hunger.

“The situation in Syria is as close to hell as we are likely to find on this Earth,” said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry was no more upbeat.

“After almost five years of fighting, it’s pretty incredible that as we come here in London in 2016, the situation on the ground is actually worse,” he said.

BOTHUM: Was a co-founder of Farm-City Pro Rodeo in 1988

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you, it has been a pleasure and an honor to be involved with the EOTEC project,” Bothum wrote. “As the project moves forward, it is time for me to step down.”

He did not elaborate.

Bothum, 61, was a former professional saddle bronc rider who won seven Columbia River Circuit saddle bronc titles between 1978 and 1988.

Jim Bainbridge, senior public relations coordinator

for the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, said Bothum qualified for the National Circuit Finals Rodeo eight times and National Finals Rodeo nine consecutive years from 1978 through 1986.

Bothum and another professional saddle bronc rider, Butch Knowles, were the co-founders of the Farm-City Pro Rodeo in 1988 in conjunction with the Umatilla County Fair. The rodeo and fair are both scheduled to relocate to the

EOTEC venue in 2017.

Construction on the main event center building is expected to be completed by March 31. According to a report from Frew Development, the first scheduled event at the site will be May 21, but an open house at the facility is tentatively planned for late April.

The event center organization is in the midst of a fundraising campaign, trying to raise \$2 million by March 1 to fund construction of facilities including perma-

nent seating and pens for the rodeo grounds.

Bothum serves as a member of the executive committee for EOTEC as a city of Hermiston representative from the Farm-City Pro Rodeo.

The EOTEC bard meeting is scheduled at 7 a.m. Friday at the Stafford Hansell Government Center, 915 SE Columbia Drive, Hermiston.

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