

Umatilla Co. racks up \$51K bill for helping Harney

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan reported his staff's work in Harney County during the armed standoff on the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge has already cost \$51,000.

Rowan said the state is looking to reimburse his office and others for the outlays, and would then turn to the federal government to recoup the funds. He said the reimbursable costs for sheriff's agencies that helped in Harney County was at \$650,000 by the first week of February. That number should still rise, even after the occupation is over and agencies process the crime scene and provide additional security.

The Oregon State Sheriffs' Association sent a

message to sheriffs in all 36 counties to participate in a conference call Jan. 3, the day after an armed mob took over the refuge in protest of the federal government's control of land. Following the call, Rowan said, he sent a patrol deputy/detective and a dispatcher to aid Harney County.

"We were told they were going to establish a command post so, I sent a very qualified dispatcher that could assist them with the set up of equipment so communications could be established," Rowan said in an email. "The patrol asset was used at their discretion but mainly provided armed security to the command post, helped gather intelligence, and general police services. Both were down there for several days and up to two weeks."

Rowan then sent two more dispatchers in the second week to help provide 24/7 dispatch services.

"There have been at least two dispatchers down there since this began," he said. "The operation called for a number of patrol assets to be sent, but I have limited resources in that arena, so I was unable to send additional patrol units down."

Umatilla County sheriff's Capt. Kathy Lieuallen, commander of the local dispatch center, said Harney County has a small operation and at times dispatchers there had to use paper and pencil and not computers to take calls.

Rowan said dispatchers were still operating in the third week of the crisis. He then sent two court security officers because Harney County was "having high

profile type court cases." The next week he said he sent three court security deputies along with dispatchers.

One court security deputy and one dispatcher were in Harney County as of Wednesday, the day before the occupation came to a peaceful end. The sheriff said he expected they would stay there as long as Malheur County needed.

Rowan, who is seeking a second term as sheriff, also stated lending a helping hand did not reduce dispatch or court security resources. The first dispatcher cut his vacation short, but the department back-filled positions to make sure there was coverage for Umatilla County and partner agencies. Sheriff's

employees typically drove to Harney County on Sundays and drove back on Fridays, then returned the next week. The sheriff's office covered lodging, meals and pay, including overtime.

Nearly every sheriff's office in the state assisted Harney County Sheriff Dave Ward and his department in some way, Rowan said, and at least two outside sheriffs were there from the onset. But Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer, Harney County's neighbor to the north, sent no one.

Palmer tried to supersede federal authority in September 2015 when he deputized 11 county residents to create a public lands natural resources plan.

Palmer also called the police roadblock where Oregon State Police troopers shot and killed militant leader Robert "LaVoy" Finicum an "ambush site," which earned him criticism from the state sheriff's association.

Rowan said sheriffs rotated in and out of Harney County every few days, so at any given time there were at least three sheriffs in the community. Oregon sheriff's offices also sent enough staff to establish six teams of two deputies each for 24/7 patrols, though Rowan said they "scaled that back a little the last two weeks."

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

Hermiston deputy superintendent finalist for Walla Walla job

East Oregonian

Wade Smith, the deputy superintendent of the Hermiston School District, is one of seven finalists for the top job in the Walla Walla School District.

The new superintendent, to be selected by the school board, will begin July 1. They will replace Bill Jordan, who will retire at the end of the school year.

Smith was hired as Hermiston's assistant superintendent of human resources in 2007 after five years as an administrator in the Morrow County School District. He served as the Hermiston interim super-



Smith

intendent for 18 months in 2011-2012 while Superintendent Fred Maiocco was deployed to Kuwait as a colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves.

"I was honored to work with an incredibly talented and supportive staff," Smith said about his time in the top leadership role. "You see districts put on the brakes or coast in that kind of situation, but we made great progress and had great success."

Upon Maiocco's return, Smith was named deputy superintendent.

Smith said his nine years in Hermiston schools have been great, but he felt it was

time to move into a superintendent leadership role. He and his family would like to stay in the region, so the Walla Walla job made sense. Hermiston School District has an enrollment of 5,500 and Walla Walla is about 6,200.

Smith will join administrators Susan Bell (Touchet, Washington), Kent Kultgen (Helena, Montana), Mark Mansell (La Center, Washington), Kevin McKay (Zillah, Washington), Jared Hoadley (Mead, Washington) and Molly Ringo (Everett, Washington) in the final round of interviews.

The Walla Walla School Board will conduct finalist interviews Feb. 29, March 1 and 2, and public meetings will be held on these dates at 5 p.m. at the district office.

MILTON-FREEWATER \$12.5M school bond set for May ballot

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The Milton-Freewater School Board approved a resolution Monday that will put a \$12.5 million bond on the May 17 ballot, although matching grants from the state and a private foundation could bump that total to \$31.5 million.

Although the election is still several months away, the Milton-Freewater Unified School District has already secured a \$15 million grant from the Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation and a \$4 million grant from the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program.

Both grants are reliant on the school district passing a bond.

The combined funds will cover a new K-3 elementary school, heating, ventilation, air conditioning and technology upgrades for McLoughlin High School, Central Middle School and Ferndale Elementary School and the replacement of Grove Elementary School with a new sports complex.

The bond will also replace a \$1 per \$1,000 assessed value levy with a \$1.10 rate.

The bond could have a wider range of effects in Milton-Freewater, in addition to improving schools.

At the same meeting the board approved putting a bond referendum on the ballot, a group from the Milton-Freewater Down-

town Alliance proposed turning Freewater Elementary School into a community recreation center.

Freewater would be one of the buildings that would be vacated as a result of the new elementary, and the alliance has targeted it for a nonprofit-operated community center if the bond passes.

According to its proposal to the school board, the alliance formed a committee to explore establishing a community center.

The committee analyzed the cost of developing and maintaining a center by looking at comparative data for recreation centers in Baker City, Tillamook, Newport and Pullman, Wash.

They also conducted an online survey that showed that most people in the community were in favor of starting a recreation center.

The proposed 17,600-24,700 square foot facility would feature a weight room, a teen/senior center, a gymnasium, locker rooms and other amenities. The pitch also recommends renting out space to local organizations and businesses.

Establishing such a center wouldn't come cheap.

Alliance Director Randy Grant estimated it would take \$1 million to open the center and another \$2 million to properly establish the center as an asset and community attraction.

Grant said the alliance committee is already beginning to identify funding sources for a fundraising effort, with the alliance needing to raise 60-70 percent of the money before they take a fundraiser to the public.

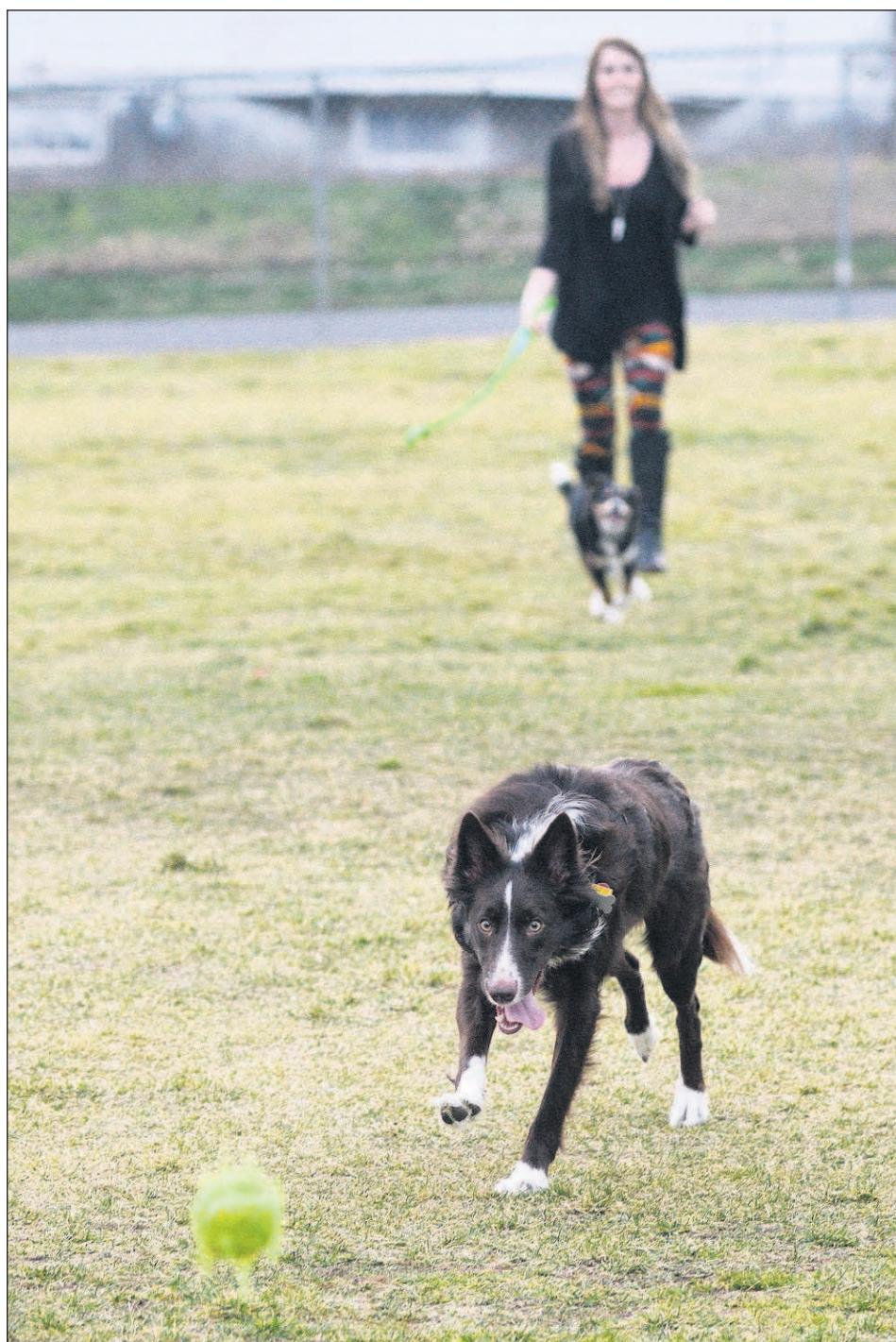
Superintendent Rob Clark said the school board was receptive to the idea of converting Freewater to a community center.

If the bond passes, Clark said he would recommend the board sign a memorandum of understanding with the alliance in July or August that will give the organization time to raise the money.

Successful fundraising could lead to a lease and if not, Clark said the district would explore other uses for the 102-year-old school.

The earliest the community center could open is 2019, after construction of the new elementary school is complete.

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



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A romp in the park

Zoey, a one-year-old red border collie, chases down a tennis ball while playing fetch with her owner Christi Jakobosky on the playground at Lincoln Elementary School on Wednesday in Pendleton.

Athena-Weston to interview three for superintendent

ATHENA — The Athena-Weston School Board has selected three finalists for its open superintendent position.

The district will hold interviews at Athena Elementary School on Tuesday from 6 to 9 p.m. in a round-robin format — each candidate will get a chance to interview with the board in a closed-door session, talk with district staff and meet with the public.

At the end of their meetings, staff and members of the public will be provided with a rating sheet, the feedback from which will be considered

by board members when they make their decision.

The finalists are Tom Yahraes, the CEO of Big Sky Discovery Academy in Big Sky, Mont.; Laure Quaresma, the assistant superintendent of Walla Walla Public Schools; and Roger Trail, the executive director of human resources for the Clarkston, Wash., School District.

All three candidates are aiming to replace Jerry Copeland, who resigned from the superintendent position to

become the human resources director with the InterMountain Education Service District.

Jim Reger, the former interim superintendent for the Milton-Freewater Unified School District, came out of retirement to fill the job temporarily while the board searched for Copeland's successor.

For more information about the superintendent search, contact the district at 541-566-3551.

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