



53/41



SEWER LAGOONS TO MOVE
PILOT ROCK/3A



MUSTANGS PREPARE FOR TIGERSCOTS REMATCH
BASKETBALL/1B

Feds find guns, explosives at Malheur refuge
NORTHWEST/2A

EAST OREGONIAN

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2016

140th Year, No. 89

WINNER OF THE 2015 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

PENDLETON

Economy gets mixed grade at Chamber luncheon

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The economic message was mixed Wednesday at the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce Economic Outlook Luncheon.

On one hand, Umatilla County's prospects are improving.

Oregon Employment Department regional economist Dallas Fridley said many key industries in Pendleton, like hospitality and durable manufacturing, are trending upward.

On the flip side, high-paying jobs in the professional service and federal government field were wiped out by the closure of the Umatilla Army Depot and are unlikely to return.

A.J. Tarnasky, the executive vice president and chief credit officer for Community Bank, said the region's housing prices are starting to rise, although a gap is opening between Pend-

See ECONOMY/8A

Cost of renewable energy mandate questioned

By HILLARY BORRUD
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon lawmakers are on track to pass a bill that would double the state's renewable energy mandate, before state utility regulators finish vetting the potential cost to consumers.

Lawmakers and Gov. Kate Brown instead relied so far on cost estimates by the utilities that helped to write the bill, which projected the legislation would increase ratepayers' bills by an average of roughly 1 percent annually.

The situation adds to questions about who is looking out for electricity consumers, as the Legislature moves to pass the bill quickly during the short 35-day session.

See ENERGY/8A

Highway to the danger zone?

Impending speed increase on I-84 sparks safety concerns

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

In less than two weeks, drivers in Eastern Oregon can legally go 70 miles per hour on Interstate 84.

The speed limit on the interstate will increase east of The Dalles

starting on March 1. Several highways east of the Cascades, including Highway 197 south of The Dalles, Highway 20 from Vale to Bend and Highway 395 from John Day to the California border, will also increase from 55 to 65 miles per hour.

Oregon Department of Transportation

spokesman Tom Strandberg said as the speed limit goes up, it is important for drivers to keep in mind that many areas affected by the change are prone to ice, snow, fog, dust storms and other conditions that require travel at well below 70 miles per hour.

"Our main concern is that people won't adjust their driving habits when conditions warrant," he said.

He also said faster speeds require longer stopping distances.

"The laws of physics don't change when the speed limit does," he said.

A recent report from the National

See SPEED/8A

HERMISTON



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hermiston firefighters Matt Lewis, Raymond Harris and Josh Smith take part in a drill Wednesday near BMCC in Hermiston.

Fire district merger back to voters

Cost to Hermiston, Stanfield taxpayers is lowered in second attempt for approval

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Hermiston and Stanfield voters will have a second crack at merging their fire districts.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners voted 3-0 Wednesday morning to place the matter on the May ballot. The proposal would establish a permanent tax rate of \$1.75 per \$1,000 of assessed property value to create Umatilla County Fire District No. 1, replacing the Hermiston and Stanfield fire districts.

The creation of the district went before voters in November

2015. That time the rate was \$2 per \$1,000. Stanfield voters approved the proposal, but Hermiston voters turned it down and the measure failed.

The county commissioner's approval came after the second and final public hearing to place the matter on the ballot. Scott Stanton, fire chief of both the Hermiston and Stanfield fire districts, again spoke in favor of the merger.

He said the notion started in 2009, and a 2012 study showed one district would better serve the people the two communities.

See FIRE/8A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hermiston firefighter Dylan Spence does an equipment check on a self-contained breathing apparatus in one of the Hermiston Fire units at the beginning of his shift Wednesday in Hermiston.

BOARDMAN

Love's Travel Stop to open in late spring



Staff photo by George Plaven

Construction is underway of a new Love's Travel Stops off Interstate 84 and Tower Road, west of Boardman.

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores is moving ahead on a new truck stop along Interstate 84 and Tower Road, about five miles west of Boardman.

Kealey Dorian, spokeswoman for the Oklahoma-based company, said the travel center should open by late spring and will include a convenience store, tire repair shop, 24 fuel pumps and Carl's Jr. restaurant.

"It's a very exciting time," Dorian said. "We're a growing company. We expect to open 40 new stores across the country this year."

Love's has more than 360 locations in 40 states, including three in Oregon. Two travel centers are located on I-84 in Ontario and Troutdale, and one on Interstate 5 in Roseburg. Dorian said the Boardman location fills another hole in their network.

"We stuck with this site because we believed it would be a really good spot for us," she said.

Permitting the project has taken six years of clearing legal challenges and appeals from Devin Oil Co., a local business that owns two fuel stations in Boardman. Morrow County has twice approved conditional land use permits for Love's

See LOVE'S/8A



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