

## STANDOFF: Judge scrapped April trial date

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"I know I have no rights, so thank you," Bundy said.

He and eight others, including his brother Ryan, were charged with carrying a firearm in relation to a crime of violence, which has a maximum penalty of life in prison.

Sean Anderson and a defendant whose name was redacted from the indictment were charged with damaging the tribal site "by means of excavation and the use of heavy equipment," Assistant U.S. Attorney

Ethan Knight said.

Three other occupiers were charged with theft of government property. Kenneth Medenbach took a Ford pickup, while Ryan Bundy and Jon Ritzheimer stole cameras valued at more than \$1,000, the indictment says.

Prosecutors have said the armed group prevented government workers from doing their jobs and threatened violence against authorities that tried to end the 41-day occupation.

The judge scrapped an April trial date, agreeing with

prosecutors to designate the case as "complex." The move ends the right to a speedy trial sought by the defendants. The judge cited the volume of evidence and number of defendants.

"I think any person looking at this room would have to concede this case is complex," said Brown, peering down at three rows of tables filled with men in prison garb and their defense attorneys.

Brown said she would wait until next month to schedule a date.

The indictment comes a

day after a county prosecutor concluded that Oregon police were justified in shooting Arizona rancher Robert "LaVoy" Finicum, a key figure in the standoff who died during a Jan. 26 traffic stop that also led to the arrests of the Bundy brothers and others.

However, FBI agents are under investigation for failing to disclose they fired two shots during the confrontation with Finicum as he exited his truck. Oregon authorities say one of those rounds hit the roof of the truck.

## RECORDS: Police get the most public record requests in Hermiston

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minutes to fill.

During that meeting assistant city manager Mark Morgan said large public records requests took a lot of staff time to fulfill. He cited one 2012 case in which the city fulfilled a public records request from an attorney for all emails containing certain key words.

Morgan estimated the request cost the city about \$2,000, including the time it took the city attorney to review each email before it was released. Because the city's public records fee was for physical copies and the emails were delivered electronically, however, the person who requested the records did not have to pay a cent.

Morgan said the police department gets the most public records requests of any department in the city "by far."

Five city councilors said they thought that part of being a public agency is being transparent with public records, however, even if it took up staff time to fulfill.

"If I'm a citizen and I pay my taxes I shouldn't have to pay \$20 for a police report," councilor John Kirwan said.

In many ways, the age of the Internet has made locating public records easier than ever. Items like meeting agendas are often a click away instead of requiring a visit to city hall, and Umatilla County's chief records officer Steve Churchill said digitized records have greatly reduced the amount of time staff spend digging through volumes of records.

"It's just a matter of inputting the name and we can pull up all the records associated with that name," he said.

The Office of County Records charges a record-location fee of \$3.75, plus 25 cents per page for copies regardless of whether they are delivered in print or electronically. Certain records such as a certified copy of a marriage license or a large map have additional fees associated with them.

"Large" records requests cost \$30 per hour, but Churchill said that fee only comes into play "every now and then."

He said more and more records requests are being handled completely through email instead of by phone or in person. Many of the office's customers are regulars that work for a company, but Churchill said he's happy to help walk someone who has never made a records request through the process.

"The more information

**"If I'm a citizen and I pay my taxes I shouldn't have to pay \$20 for a police report,"**

**— John Kirwan,**  
Hermiston city councilor

they have, the better, because it takes less time to find it," he said.

Public agencies' approach to public records requests vary in more than just their fee structure. Some will take a simple phone call or email, others have an official form to fill out.

The city of Pendleton has a form available on its website and at city hall. The form asks whether citizens would like to inspect the records, obtain an electronic copy or have a physical copy mailed to them, and notes that different fees will be assessed for the different options.

Milton-Freewater has a public records request form on its police department website that lists a non-refundable \$8 fee for all public records requests and a \$1 per page fee for documents more than three pages. It also lists a \$25 fee for audio recordings and \$15 for video recordings.

The city of Umatilla voted in an update to the public records fee schedule in February. The vote added a \$25 per hour fee for research by police department staff to a provision already in place of \$20 per hour for clerical/secretarial staff time. Umatilla's fee schedule also includes a 50 cent per copy fee for hard copies of miscellaneous records and a list of individual charges for specific documents.

On a state level, the legislature unanimously passed a bill during the session directing the State Chief Information Officer to develop standards and protocols for state agencies to fill public record requests in electronic form, and directing the Oregon Department of Administrative Services to provide technical assistance and coordination to agencies fulfilling a request.

A list of all current public records requests at the state level, including who made the request, can be found at [www.oregon.gov/gov/media/Pages/Public-Records-Log.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/gov/media/Pages/Public-Records-Log.aspx). The page includes downloadable copies of all records from all requests filed since 2014.

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## CUSTODIAN: No spring break for custodial staff

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apply at the school district, and she did. Hired as a custodian at Hermiston High School, Stephens said she only planned on keeping the job for two years.

"I wasn't going to stay. I was going to leave, but I discovered it was my niche," she said. "I discovered I liked children, I liked this place. Every day is a little bit different."

With no children of her own, Stephens became a mother-figure to hundreds of children at once. She picks them up when they fall and picks up after them when they leave. She answers questions and ties shoes.

Stephens works before and during school hours. Steve Brown works the night shift. Between the two of them, they keep West Park Elementary running, not just for school but for community events, sports games and school assemblies.

As of Wednesday, the Hermiston School District employed 28 custodians. While much of the staff prepares for spring break this month, there is no spring break — or summer break or winter break — for the custodial staff. While school is out, the custodians work, deep cleaning carpets, washing walls and polishing floors. During the summer break, the elementary custodial team works together, deep cleaning each school for 10 days at a time.



Photo by E.J. Harris

**Lead custodian Debbie Stephens watches as students throw away garbage from their lunch on Wednesday at West Hills Elementary School in Hermiston.**

"It's quite extensive," Stephens says. "There's always more to do, and there's still only eight hours in a day."

As a custodian, Stephens has worked with 10 principals, thousands of students and two new schools. Although Stephens has worked at every school in the district, 17 years of her career have been spent at West Park.

Over the years, she has curated a collection of memories — like when a former principal wore purple hair all day or when the staff all dressed up as Dr. Seuss characters and paraded around the old school.

One time, the canal over-

flowed and turned into what Stephens dubbed "Lake West Park."

"It flooded the playground, all the way up to the doors. That was a fun day. I called my boss and said, 'I think we have a water issue,'" she said with a laugh.

Stephens has moved equipment and cleaned spilled and sticky Gatorade from inside the automatic bleachers. She helped supervise the move from the old West Park building to the new one, and has cleaned a lot of vomit. She once stared in consternation at a light bulb someone had attempted to flush down a toilet.

Stephens has worked at

West Park long enough that children who remember "Miss Debbie" from their school days are now enrolling their kindergartners for school. She has watched the schools adapt to technology and new instruction. But despite all the changes, the best part of her job remains the same as it was 27 years ago: the students.

"The best part of the day is knowing I'm going to come in and get a hug," she said. "When I decide to retire, I'll have to figure out what I want to be when I grow up."

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## HIGHWAY: Contractors could do project for \$200K if handled privately

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tax credit. The downside, Watkins said, is that the project would have to follow government standards for contracts — including paying prevailing wages — and would cost an estimated \$1 million to pave a loop that is less than a mile long.

Watkins said he and Bill Kik have been talking to contractors who have told them they could do the project for \$200,000 if the property owners handled it privately. But that money wouldn't be credited to their property taxes, and it leaves a question of what to do with neighbors who can't or won't contribute to the project even though their business will benefit.

"There was a small consensus that we should try to handle this ourselves," Watkins said.

He said about two-thirds of property owners abutting those roads had already expressed some interest and he planned on meeting one-on-one with the rest.

If the property owners take the initiative to pave the loop

of road starting where vehicles turn west onto Baggett Lane from Highway 395, Watkins said trucks would gravitate there when accessing the network of businesses west of that stretch of highway. He said a traffic signal at Baggett Lane — another priority for the committee — is already in the Oregon Department of Transportation's master plan to improve safety. Paving Baggett Lane "elevates it up the priority list" past projects in other cities.

"There won't be any more laying on the throttle once you pass Punkin Center and going 70 once you hit Baggett Lane," he said.

On Tuesday the committee also gave other updates on their work to neighbors who had been invited to the meeting. One thing they discussed is that a lack of water for fire suppression was hindering economic development in the area.

Mabbott said the committee was looking for grants to bring more non-potable water to the stretch of land but was "not quite there yet" as far as sending in applications. There was also some

talk of seeing if the city of Umatilla would be interested in extending its urban growth boundary in order to bring water south and speed up the building permit process by moving it from state to city jurisdiction.

Tom Houge, an economic development planning specialist from the Oregon Department of Land Conservation, also spoke with the group about creating more flexibility with zoning in the area, particularly by creating an overlay.

He said it is not uncommon for the allowable uses in zones to be out of date. Creating an overlay instead of changing the base zoning would add more allowed uses to properties if they meet certain requirements such as landscaping or clean-up.

"You want to make sure businesses can get on the ground here, stay on the ground and play well with their neighbors," he said.

Committee member Kari Christiansen, owner of nearby Sherrell Chevrolet, told property owners in attendance the committee had also been working to

## Korea tensions grow, threats escalate

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea on Thursday responded to South Korean unilateral sanctions by firing short-range ballistic missiles into the sea in a show of defiance and vowing to "liquidate" all remaining South Korean assets at former cooperative projects in the North.

The moves are the latest in an escalating standoff between the Koreas that began in January when North Korea detonated what it said was an "H-bomb of justice," its fourth nuclear test. Since then, Pyongyang has launched a long-range rocket; Seoul has shut down the last remaining cooperative project between

the rivals, a jointly run factory park in the North Korean border town of Kaesong, and slapped sanctions on the North over its recent nuclear test and rocket launch; the U.N. has imposed sanctions; and the North has threatened nuclear strikes on Seoul and the U.S. mainland.

The missile firing Thursday comes a day after the North released photos of leader Kim Jong Un standing beside what appears to be a nuclear warhead mock-up.

The North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea said Thursday that Pyongyang will "liquidate" South Korean assets at the closed Kaesong factory park

and the scrapped tourism resort at Diamond Mountain, both of which are in North Korea. In a continuation of bellicose rhetoric that has spiked in recent weeks, the statement said North Korea will also take a series of unspecified steps to impose "lethal" military, political and economic blows on the South Korean government to accelerate its "pitiable demise."

The statement called South Korea's unilateral sanctions "laughable, unsightly" behavior, and referred to South Korea's female president, Park Geun-hye, as an "American prostitute," the latest in a series of crude sexist attacks on her.

Friday  
Meals

LENT

March 11 from 5 to 7:00 p.m.  
@ the St. Anthony Hospital Blue Mountain Cafe

**Cedar Plank Salmon - \$7.50/Adults**  
- \$7.00/Children & Seniors  
with Rice Pilaf & Buttered Green Beans

**Baked Potato Bar - \$4.00/with toppings All you can eat.**

**Salmon/Potato Bar Combo - \$11.50**

**Clam Chowder Bread Bowl - \$4.25**  
Single Cup \$1.25

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