

PENDLETON

K-5 students to start late, have shorter year

East Oregonian

The Pendleton School Board unanimously approved a new calendar for the 2016-2017 school year, staggering the start dates for K-5 and 6-12 students.

Under the new calendar, grades 6-12 start Aug. 29 and take a week off Sept. 12-16 for Round-Up, and K-5 students start school Sept. 19, although the Pendleton Early Learning Center will hold a "soft start" for kindergartners Aug. 29-Sept. 1.

The school board was forced to consider a new calendar to meet the construction schedule for the two new schools set to open in the fall.

Contractors will complete the new Washington and Sherwood Heights elementary schools in time for the next school year, but demolition of the old buildings and other construction means the schools won't be ready until after Round-Up.

The altered calendar does present new challenges. Since all students end the school year on June 8 despite different start times,

K-5 students will only get 161 instructional days as opposed to 170 for grades 6-12.

If the district doesn't add instructional hours to the K-5 school year, those students wouldn't meet the state threshold for instruction time, which would require the district to notify the Oregon Department of Education and provide a plan to avoid the shortfall in the future.

Superintendent Jon Peterson said central office administrators will discuss their options with elementary school principals, which include cutting time from recess or lengthening the school day.

Another internal discussion among administrators is scheduling make-up days for inclement weather, a new requirement of the department of education will institute next school year.

Peterson said the district is also working with Pendleton Parks and Recreation to provide activities to students who would ordinarily receive supervision from older siblings attending high school.

Umatilla County to combine health and human services

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

The Umatilla County departments of public health and human services are about to merge under one roof. The move comes after turmoil in 2015 that saw the county fire the human services director and two alcohol and drug counselors.

Human services since mid-2015 has been under the oversight of the county's community justice department. George Murdock, chairman of the county's three-member board of commissioners, explained Mark Royal was retiring as director of community justice in mid-2015, so the board tapped the veteran administrator to step in and right the human services ship.

Royal did that, Murdock said, and now the county is ready to move the agency out from community justice.

"It was never meant to be a permanent arrangement because there's a much more natural tie between health and human services," Murdock said. "Most counties in Oregon have a combined health and human services department."

The reorganization takes effect July 1, he said, and creates two deputy directors, one to oversee the health division and the other for human services, which covers drug and alcohol treatment, developmental disabilities and veteran affairs. County health director Meghan DeBolt

will become head of the entire department.

The county commissioners will consider the creation of the human services deputy when they meet Wednesday at 9 a.m. at the Umatilla County Courthouse, Pendleton. The county budget already has the funds for the position, Murdock said.

The board of commissioners also will hold a public hearing and vote on a request to remove about 90 acres from the Milton-Freewater School District and add them to the Athena-Weston School District.

The request came from Preston Winn, long-serving member of the Athena-Weston School Board, who is moving about a quarter of a mile up the road from one end of his farm to the other. But that move would place him out of his district and into Milton-Freewater's.

The county gave notice of Winn's request to change the boundaries of the school districts on Feb. 22 and also published notices in the *East Oregonian* and on the county's website. No one filed a challenge, and Oregon law allows county boards to consider changes or mergers of school districts.

Murdock and county counsel Doug Olsen said Winn has property in both districts, and changing the boundaries affects only his property and would allow him to stay on the Athena-Weston School Board.

EBT cards to improve WIC

East Oregonian

Recipients of WIC (Women, Infants and Children) now have a new way to shop for food benefits using an electronic benefit transaction card.

WIC families served by Umatilla-Morrow County Head Start recently began receiving their cards. In the past, recipients used paper vouchers to purchase items. The EBT cards will make it easier for WIC families to track their monthly food balance and assist with making healthy choices. Participants will have access to a new WICshopper smart phone app, allowing them to scan a food's bar code to determine if the food item is allowed with WIC funds.

The local Head Start provides services to nearly 4,000 lower income pregnant or nursing women,

infants and children under 5. A program under the Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division, it has offered nutrition education and healthy food support for more than 40 years.

There are WIC clinics in Pendleton, Hermiston, Milton-Freewater, Umatilla and Boardman. For more information, visit www.umchs.org or www.healthoregon.org/wic.

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HERMISTON

Two new brand options up for vote

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian



Watermelon is returning to the Hermiston water tower.

The branding committee commissioned by the city of Hermiston and Hermiston Chamber of Commerce unveiled two possible branding concepts for the city on Tuesday, and both logos feature a slice of Hermiston's famous melon.

Residents have until the end of March to vote on the two logo designs, two font choices and between two taglines: "Where Life is Sweet" and "Where Opportunity Shines."

The city council got a sneak peek at the committee's work on Monday night and were pleased with the results.

"I'm very happy with what you're bringing forward," Doug Primmer said. "This is what I was hoping for."

Doug Smith said he would be "happy as a clam" with any of the options presented, and Jackie Myers said she was impressed with the results.

The tagline that gets

the most votes from the community will replace "You Can GROW Here," which drew jokes about cultivating marijuana after it was painted on the water tower south of town. When residents were surveyed about the brand, 67 percent said they disliked the "You Can GROW Here" tagline, and 92 percent said the logo needed to include a watermelon.

In response, the city and chamber of commerce put together a 25-person committee of citizens to work with Focal Point Marketing of Kennewick, Washington, on a new set of logos, taglines and fonts to present for a community survey. The results will be incorporated into the city's marketing and used on city property, including letterheads, vehi-

cles and the water tower.

Committee member Claudia Jimenez said she enjoyed working with Focal Point through the process, and said she was happy the committee included a wide variety of ages and backgrounds.

"We've been mindful of community input," she said. "It's been something that has really been, you could say, a guiding light."

Dru Walchli, one of the Hermiston High School students on the committee, said she didn't know what she was getting herself into when she volunteered for the role, but she was glad that the city and chamber included students in the process.

"It's their brand too," she said. "They're going to grow up with it, so we want to

make sure they like it."

Mayor David Drotzmann said he and the other committee members had worked hard through what was "very much a consensus-building exercise" to come up with something that captured what the community was hoping for, so he was relieved that the council liked what they saw. He encouraged everyone to share the survey on social media.

"We had a great turnout with the previous survey and we hope we can get a similar turnout this time," he said.

The survey, in English and Spanish, can be accessed online at www.hermiston-brand.com and on paper at city hall and the chamber of commerce offices through March 31. It also will be available at the Hispanic Advisory Committee meeting March 21 from 7-8:30 p.m. at city hall and on March 16 from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Hermiston High School commons.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

MILTON-FREEWATER

Seven Hills Vineyard applies for new well

Won't increase amount of water to draw

By GEORGE PAVLEN
East Oregonian

Seven Hills Vineyard is drilling a new well on the west side of its property in the Dry Creek Basin near Milton-Freewater, which has raised some alarm from neighbors.

But Mike Ladd, region manager with the Oregon Water Resources Department in Pendleton, said a new well doesn't mean new water for the vineyard.

Rather, Seven Hills applied in January to transfer a portion of its existing water right to a new delivery point where the well is being built. The transfer would not increase the amount nor change the source of water used for commercial irrigation.

The Water Resources Department continues to review the application. Ladd

said Seven Hills is taking a risk by drilling before the transfer has been approved.

"They cannot use any water from that well until the transfer is approved, if it's approved," Ladd said.

If for any reason the transfer is not approved, Ladd said Seven Hills could wind up with a well they can't pump for irrigation. The Water Resources Department is still looking over the vineyard's application to make sure the transfer doesn't harm other water users or tap into a different aquifer.

Norm McKibben, a managing partner of Seven Hills, said the vineyard has reached out to its closest neighbor and is confident the transfer will move forward without any issue.

"There's no intention to increase the amount of water

we're allowed," McKibben said. "Most people don't really understand what we're doing."

Seven Hills is the cornerstone property of a larger collection of vineyards known as SeVein, located on the southern border of the Walla Walla American Viticultural Area. McKibben is one of several partners in SeVein who have joined together to support each other's development.

All together, SeVein is certified for 1,528 acres of irrigation. There are four wells on the property, which reach down 1,200 feet deep.

The purpose for a fifth well is twofold, McKibben said: first, to extend development at SeVein to the westernmost ridge, and also to phase out one of their existing wells that was drilled into a fault and has slowly become plugged.

"We're just now getting

into development at the far west end," McKibben said.

McKibben said they expect the transfer application will be approved. Once the Water Resources Department finishes its review, it will issue a preliminary determination and open public comment for 30 days.

"It's a very open, public process," Ladd said. "If (people) have concerns, they need to follow that process and make sure their voices are heard."

Seven Hills is one of the first commercial vineyards in the Walla Walla AVA, selling wine grapes to more than 25 different wineries. Varieties include Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Sangiovese, Cabernet Franc, Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc.

Contact George Pavlen at gpavlen@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

BRIEFLY

Hermiston schools plan for growth

HERMISTON — The Hermiston School Board of Education unanimously chose to plan for modest growth in the 2016-7 budget.

The board approved the financial planning parameters on Monday night for district staff to use to build the next year's budget.

The board opted to plan the budget based on:

- A weighted student enrollment growth of 50
- The district's portion of the state of Oregon setting aside \$7.37 billion for schools
- Maintaining the PERS Reserve fund for 2017-8 school year
- Keeping a 9 percent ending fund balance

The district is projecting a \$42.3 million payroll and \$7.9 million in accounts payable, which includes items such as utilities, transportation costs and maintenance. The forecast expenditures with is \$50.2 million, and the forecast revenue will these financial planning parameters is \$50.9 million.

Heppner YCC offers summer jobs

HEPPNER — The Heppner Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest is recruiting students between the ages of 15 and 18 for

summer jobs with the Youth Conservation Corps.

Work will include hands-on labor in the field, such as noxious weed removal, trail maintenance, campground maintenance, building fences and digging fire breaks around logged areas within the district.

The program begins June 20 and will run for six weeks.

Youth are paid the current Oregon minimum wage of \$9.25 per hour. Apart from the age requirement, students must have permission from their parents to enroll, a valid Social Security number and transportation to and from the Heppner Ranger District office.

Applications will be accepted through 2 p.m. on

April 15, and can be found at the Heppner Forest Service office or at Heppner, Ione, Irrigon and Riverside high schools. Successful applicants will be selected through a random drawing on April 15, and the winners will be notified by mail.

For more information, contact the Heppner Ranger District at 541-676-9187.

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