

BOND: Last passed a bond in 1996 to pay for the River Parkway

Continued from 1A

Type 6 fire engine

- \$145,000 to replace one rescue vehicle
- \$35,000 for safety equipment and turnouts
- \$30,000 for medical equipment
- \$25,000 for Jaws of Life extrication equipment

To assuage council concerns about the new station's maintenance costs, Ciraulo wrote the city will cover those costs through utility savings, raising ambulance rates, increase its contract rates with other fire districts and other measures.

Ciraulo also included a general obligation bond levy rates analysis from investment bank Piper Jaffray.

According to Piper Jaffray's report, the city's actual bond rate fell from \$1.26 per \$1,000 in assessed value in 2001 to 28 cents in 2016.

Piper Jaffray compared Pendleton's levy rates to 14 other cities in Eastern Oregon, including Hermiston, Stanfield, Umatilla and Milton-Freewater.

Pendleton's 28-cent bond rate was the fourth lowest in the comparison, only edging out Umatilla, Union and Stanfield.

However, Pendleton's overall tax district rate, which includes other taxing entities like the Pendleton School District and Umatilla County, is the second highest amongst the compared cities.

The city last passed a bond in 1996 to pay for the River Parkway. Since it

expires this year, that means there will be no city bonds on the books starting in 2017.

The fire bond would assess 62 cents per \$1,000 in assessed value.

City tax proposals have fallen short at the ballot box over the past two years.

A \$10 million bond proposal covering a new fire station and deferred maintenance in 2014 received commitment from the city council but never made it to the ballot due to a filing error, while a 2015 gas tax proposal was voted down by a wide margin.

Despite the recent setbacks, Mayor Phillip Houk said a longer campaign window, a committed fire chief and a more unified city council will put the bond in a better position to succeed.

Although her concerns were legitimate, Houk said former city councilor Jane Hill's refusal to campaign for the gas tax put it at a disadvantage.

"That was an opinion that killed it from the start," he said.

Councilor Becky Marks has been an especially vocal supporter of building a new fire station and pushed the council to pursue it earlier.

Marks said the council needs to take time to properly educate the public, especially since its residents who will bear the brunt of the costs.

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State finds cancer cluster near glassmaker

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon health officials say they've discovered a small, statistically significant cluster of bladder cancer diagnoses in two North Portland neighborhoods near a glassmaking business.

The Oregonian reports it's the first time the state's investigation of community concerns about poisonous heavy metals in the air has uncovered a noteworthy cluster.

Between 1999 and 2003, doctors diagnosed 12 people with bladder cancers in North Portland, more than twice the number state researchers

expected to find.

During the 15 years for which it has data, the state found a total of 22 bladder cancers diagnosed among people living in two Census tracts immediately surrounding Uroboros Glass. The state expected to find 15 cases.

Bladder cancer is associated with the oral ingestion of arsenic, which the company has said it formerly used.

State health official Katrina Hedberg cautioned against drawing conclusions, saying it isn't possible to attribute the cancers to any specific exposure.

JAIL: 4,394 inmate bookings last year

Continued from 1A

bed, refolding her rip-proof blanket again and again. Jail employee Lu Morse, from high in the control room, monitored both inmates.

This jail and others across the nation have become de facto mental institutions. Jail administrators have the unenviable task of deciding whether to simply house the troubled inmates for the length of their sentence or work to improve their mental health. At the Umatilla County Jail, there is a philosophy of helping the inmates heal, if possible. Jail personnel also work to connect the inmates with other agencies such as the Veteran's Administration, so they can continue their progress when they get out of jail.

"People have the idea that we put people into custody when they're in crisis and we just hold them, then kick them out the door," said Jail Commander Stewart Harp. "We really do our best to help everyone who comes into our control. We don't always succeed, but we always try."

Umatilla County Undersheriff Jim Littlefield agrees with that.

"It's our goal for them not to come back to jail or commit any further crimes," Littlefield said.

Whether many of them should be in a mental health facility rather than jail is another question, he said, yet law enforcement has little choice.

"With the lack of (mental health) services in the area, the jail is really the only place for police to take them — it's the default," he said. "We don't want them out in society."

During bookings — there were 4,394 last year — each inmate receives a mental health assessment.

On this day, an officer led a dazed-looking man wearing a belly chain into the jail intake area. The brand-new inmate stood stoically as the officer patted him down and asked

questions such as, "Where are you?"

"The mental health assessment starts right there," said Thoren Hearn, the jail's administrative sergeant.

If any red flags show up, he said, a more extensive evaluation takes place. Ed Taylor, the jail's indomitable mental health coordinator, does plenty of these assessments. At different times in his career, Taylor worked in other organizations with children and families, couples having marital difficulties and people with developmental disabilities. Now, he focuses on prisoners. While admitting, "It's very painful to look at the plight of people's lives," he said he finds joy in his purpose.

"I love this population," he said. "I have a chocolate heart. I want to help everybody. I want everyone to be a success."

Taylor keeps his radar tuned to the ebbs and flows of the inmates. He is alerted by the medical staff, corrections officers, inmates or others who notice when someone shows signs of mental distress. He meets with inmates one-on-one in his office or treks around the jail to check in with them.

Taylor said drug and alcohol history is so common, it's difficult to tease it apart from mental illness to figure out which came first, like the proverbial question of the chicken and egg. Taylor gets frustrated with those who won't treat mental illness until the person gets clean.

"Usually there's a drug or alcohol problem because there's a mental challenge," he said. "This person is hurting. Let's go from there."

Many "are killing themselves slowly," he said. "A 40-year-old is going to look like an 80-year-old. They've trashed their bodies. They are people who have dug some really big holes that they have to dig themselves out of."

It's either die or make a U-turn. Taylor leads a

group designed to help them grab the steering wheel and wrench it hard. He gives the inmates tools and strategies for dealing productively with frustration and anger and other stuff going on inside their brains. The 90-minute weekly group is getting results. Each member designs their own personal decision-making process using the principles Taylor gives them. Despite his eagerness to get everyone on a better path, he doesn't let an inmate join the group unless he is committed to change.

"Are you prepared to handle the consequences of being in this group?" he asks.

One principal, for example, is to not fight back. He remembers one inmate who asked, "You mean ball up into a fetal position and just take it?"

"Exactly," Taylor told him.

The idea is not to react immediately in fight-or-flight mode, but to observe, feel the emotions internally and then make a rational decision. The lessons take hold.

"I've discovered that about 80 to 95 percent of guys who go through this group — I don't see them back here in jail," Taylor said.

Inmate JC Thompson used the principles he learned recently when there was a snafu with his release papers. The old JC Thompson would have exploded, he said.

"In the past, I would have gotten angry, walked away and shut down," Thompson said. "I was able to process it through and think about it calmly."

Taylor and the jail's other mental health and medical professionals (including therapists from Lifeways who lead groups and do assessments) can't help everyone. Inmates with severe mental illness are placed away from the other inmates for their own safety.

Last year, 840 inmates received psychotropic medications prescribed by

the jail's nurse practitioner. When Taylor visits the most severely ill, they are often delusional. They sometimes spit at him or throw things.

"It's sad," Taylor said. "We house them and make sure they're not a danger to themselves or others. That's all we can do."

They can be preyed upon and need a stable environment, he said. He credited jail administrators for addressing the population's vulnerability by housing them away from the general population.

"They could be out on the street or in here and not being taken care of," Taylor said. "That would be horrific."

Taylor technically doesn't work for the jail. He is an employee of Correct Care Solutions, which contracts with Umatilla County.

Taylor's boss, Health Services Administrator Gloria Daum, said medicating inmates for mental illness is tricky.

"We can't force medication on them," she said. "They have to be actively self-harming."

The jail personnel worry about self-harm. The jail's suicide watch cells "are always full," she said. Last year, 54 different inmates occupied the two cells.

Taylor turns his mind away from the jail when he leaves. He and his wife of 38 years don't speak much about his work. He reads voraciously, enjoys his two grandchildren, grows medicinal herbs, attends church and trains performing pigeons, then goes back to work ready to plunge back into life at the jail.

He embraces his job, yet steels himself at the same time. Other than his group sessions, he never knows where he will be at any given moment.

"I used to plan my day," Taylor said, chuckling a bit. "I don't anymore. I just go by the seat of my pants."

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