

PLUTE: Will continue to manage properties from afar

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Plute even briefly considered running for mayor, before a succession of local controversies soured him on Pendleton politics.

Pendleton Plumbing sued Plute's development company in 2013 over a billing dispute, and the two sides battled in court for years before reaching a settlement agreement this winter.

To pay for his legal fees during his lawsuit, Plute fell behind on his property taxes, although he said he's now mostly caught up.

Plute's political career was no less contentious during that time.

Plute led a campaign to enact a 5-cent gas tax to help pay for road repairs across the city, but voters widely rejected the measure in November.

In December, Plute joined five other councilors in approving a \$5 street utility fee, an additional funding mechanism the council had previously decided to enact whether the gas tax passed or not.

A group called Pendleton Citizens United used all of these events and more to launch a recall petition against Plute in January.

"When people started questioning my character, it was time to leave Pendleton," he said.

Plute said one of the reasons he and his wife decided to move to Eugene is its city government already has funding measures like a gas tax in place.

Pendleton Citizens United treasurer Larry Anderson said he was unsure if the group would continue collecting signatures for a recall, but

would be satisfied with a Plute resignation.

To trigger a recall election, Pendleton Citizens United needs to collect 705 signatures by April 25. Anderson said they have already collected 600 signatures.

A characteristically outspoken Plute was unsparing in his description of Pendleton Citizens United and their ilk, calling them the "village idiots."

As for the three downtown buildings that have been a source of both praise and scrutiny, Plute said he will continue to manage them from afar and return to Pendleton once a month to take care of his tenants' needs.

Mayor Phillip Houk said Plute should be proud of his time on the council and the investment he has made in the downtown area, while also

noting his blunt demeanor.

"Al just said what he thought ... you always knew where he stood," Houk said.

Plute plans to stay on the council through May, which would allow him to give input during the city's budgeting process.

Plute said his work on the city council wasn't for the title or prestige but for the betterment of Pendleton and he is confident that his ideas on finding new sources of revenue and sustainability will be vindicated.

"I've given (the city) a road map to success, and its up to them whether to follow it," he said.

Plute's last city council meeting will be May 17, he said.

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WORLD BRIEFLY

Supreme Court bolsters political influence of U.S. Latinos

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court unanimously endorsed election maps that bolster the growing political influence of America's Latinos on Monday, ruling that states can count everyone, not just eligible voters, in drawing voting districts.

The decision rejected a challenge from Texas voters that also could have diluted the voting power of urban Democrats, to the benefit of rural Republicans.

The case offered a test of the principle of "one person, one vote," the requirement laid out by the Supreme Court in 1964 that political districts be roughly equal in population. The issue here, though, was what population to consider: everyone or just eligible voters.

All 50 states use total population as their basis for drawing district lines, but the challengers said the rural state Senate districts in which they lived had vastly more eligible voters than urban districts, making their votes count for less, in violation of the Constitution.

In Texas, and other states with large immigrant populations, urban districts include many more people who are too young, not yet citizens, in the country illegally or otherwise ineligible to vote. All of them, recorded by the census, count for the purpose of drawing political districts.

Civil rights groups said forcing states to change their method of

constructing districts would have damaged Latino political influence.

The court stopped short of saying that states must use total population. And it also did not rule on whether states are free to use a different measure, as Texas had asked.

Federal report: global warming making U.S. sick

WASHINGTON (AP) — Man-made global warming is making America sicker, and it's only going to get worse, according to a new federal government report.

The 332-page report issued Monday by the Obama administration said global warming will make the air dirtier, water more contaminated and food more tainted. It warned of diseases, such as those spread by ticks and mosquitoes, longer allergy seasons, and thousands of heat wave deaths.

Environmental Protection Agency chief Gina McCarthy said if that's not enough, climate change affects people's mental health, too.

"It's not just about polar bears and melting ice caps. It's about our families. It's about our future," McCarthy said at a White House event unveiling the report.

Climate change affects more people in more ways than anything doctors have seen in the past, said Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. He said the report allows doctors to better quantify "the sheer number of pathways through which climate affects health."

That includes air pollution worsened from power plants, pollen and even wildfires, he said.

MEDALS: 'He served our country and he earned them'

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II Victory Medal.

Mellick watched with emotion as she stood in the background.

After the short ceremony, guests gave Jones rock star treatment. They shook his hand. Members of the color guard saluted. Many took out their phones and got photos of Jones and his medals.

Jones looked a tad dazed. "I didn't know this was going to happen," he said.

He said he simply hadn't applied for the medals. He had returned to the United States in 1945 to be re-assigned, likely for an assault on Japan, but the war ended with the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thoughts of medals drifted away as he got back to civilian life.

Mellick thought her uncle should receive his medals.

"He served our country and he earned them," she



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

A photo of William Jones sits atop of a cake to celebrate the World War II veteran receiving long-overdue medals Saturday at the Columbia Grange Hall in Hermiston.

said. "I'm very thankful for him and what he did."

She got offers of help from the offices of two Oregon Congressmen, Rep. Greg Walden and Sen. Ron Wyden.

One of Jones' fans on Saturday was Galen Jones, 23 years younger than his brother Bill, who said he has

long admired the man.

"He's my hero," Galen said.

Galen said he noticed emotion on Bill's face as he received the medals, but something else, too.

"I could feel his sensitivity because of all the others who died, while he didn't have to," Galen said. "It takes a lot

for him to open up about the war."

He said his brother isn't hazy about the past or the present, and though he was having trouble hearing with all the background noise at the grange, Bill remains sharp. His brother, Galen said, is a world-class cribbage player who still plays in invitational tournaments in Reno.

Near Galen, Halverson watched Jones with a smile. He had traveled 80 miles from where he lives now in Kahlotus, Washington, to award the medals, but said it was worth the drive.

"It was really an honor for me to do this," Halverson said. "We don't have too many World War II veterans left. We want to make sure all of them are recognized as much as possible. It was a privilege."

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DEPOT: Pentagon insists it needs the water rights to wells

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Guard and have two wells split between entities.

"It comes down to well number one," Smith said.

He said the Pentagon insists it needs the water rights to that well, but has also said it is open to leasing most of those rights to the authority if they worked together to put in infrastructure needed to get the defunct well working again.

"I genuinely think they want to reach a good resolution," Smith said. "But their dilemma — and I think they're sincere on this — is that they have a national security issue."

That issue is wanting to make sure they have the infrastructure in place, should the water be needed once again to support a war effort. They also want to have the water on hand for fire suppression.

Those issues were discussed when Smith and board members Kim Puzey (Port of Umatilla) and Gary Neal (Port of Morrow) met with Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission officials in Washington, D.C. in March. Puzey said the atmosphere of the meeting started off "bristly" and "prickly" but Smith did a good job of practicing the principle "seek first to understand, then to be understood"



EO file photo

Some structures involved in the destruction of chemical agents at the Umatilla Army Depot remain after the incinerating facility had been demolished.

and the tension in the room lowered considerably as things went on.

Puzey said even though the water discussion was taking a long time, he believed that taking the time to negotiate was, in the end, going to be mutually beneficial for both the development authority and the National Guard.

Smith said he felt that another trip to Washington, D.C., in the next couple of weeks while Congress is going through the appropriations process would be highly productive for moving things along. The board agreed.

At the beginning of the meeting the board heard from a potential client. Taylor Steele said her employer, One Energy Renewables,

a Seattle-based company specializing in utility-scale solar farms, was interested in leasing a section of depot land for a solar panel installation.

"I've been out there and saw some sites we think are absolutely phenomenal," she said.

When asked how big of a project they were looking at, she said things could change but they would consider somewhere in the ballpark of 20 megawatts. The solar array Umatilla Electric Cooperative just brought online in Umatilla County is 1.3 megawatts and puts out enough energy for 112 homes.

Puzey said he thought One Energy Renewables would be a good example to take

"Their dilemma — and I think they're sincere on this — is that they have a national security issue."

— Greg Smith, executive director

to the federal government and show them the types of projects that are being held up because the conveyance process was taking so long.

The Columbia Development Authority is a partnership between Umatilla County, Morrow County, Port of Umatilla, Port of Morrow and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

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CRASH: Also investigating Monday morning crash near Baker City

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to avoid the wrong-way driver. An ambulance also took her to St. Anthony Hospital.

State police did not know yet if drugs or alcohol were a factor in the crashes.

The Oregon Department of Transportation, Umatilla Tribal Fire and Ambulance, Pendleton Fire and Ambulance, Umatilla County Sheriff's Department, Pendleton Police Department and the Umatilla Tribal Police Department responded to the scenes.

While officers were investigating the fatal crash, a 1994 Ford Ranger drove through the closed scene. Tribal police stopped the pickup and arrested Joshua Haynie, 32, of Pendleton, for driving under the influence of intoxicants. He later provided a breath sample with a blood-alcohol level

of .16 percent, twice the legal limit.

Oregon State Police also are investigating a crash Monday morning near Baker City that left an adult and a child dead.

State police reported preliminary information indicates Monday at 5:34 a.m. a 2006 Chevy Cobalt was westbound and for unknown reasons left the roadway and rolled several times, ejecting a child.

The child and an adult passenger died at the scene. An air ambulance flew the driver to Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center in Boise, Idaho, for treatment of serious injuries. State police closed one westbound lane of I-84 for approximately four hours following the crash.

And James W. Crow, 62, of Kennewick died March 28 after crashing his semitractor hauling a double tanker of milk on Interstate 84 just west of Boardman.

TRAVEL THE WORLD'S LEGENDARY RIVERS

THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 2016
6:30 PM
AAA Pendleton
1729 SW Court Avenue
RSVP: 541.276.2243

Join AAA Travel and river cruise expert, Michael Weldon, as we explore the value and comfort of a deluxe all-inclusive river cruise aboard award-winning Viking Longships. Spend less time getting there and more time being there.

All events are open to the public and free to attend, but space is limited. Please RSVP.

VIKING RIVER CRUISES

AAA

AAA.COM/TRAVEL

The Forest Plan and You

4.9 million acres of public land in Eastern Oregon are operating under plans and science that date back to 1990. Oregon Public Broadcasting will sit down with Malheur National Forest Supervisor Steve Beverlin and representatives from environmentalist, recreation, tribal and timber interests to talk about conflicts of interest and the path forward.

Wednesday, April 6 6:30-8p.m.
(Arrive before 6:30p.m. for seating, forum will begin at 7p.m.)

Blue Mountain Community College ST-200 Lecture Hall

The forum will be broadcast on **Think Out Loud** on Thursday at noon and 8p.m.

This conversation is brought to you by Oregon Public Broadcasting and the East Oregonian

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