

PENDLETON

City council debates on how to communicate

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Opinions on city communication were in no short supply at a Pendleton City Council workshop Tuesday.

InterMountain Education Service District spokeswoman Michele Madril, who the city hired on contract to help formulate a communications plan, presented a revised version to the council. One of the revisions was additional language on how to respond to criticism.

"Responding to public criticism seems to lengthen the time that controversial issues involving the city remain in the media and/or at the forefront of citizens' minds," the plan states. "Therefore, it is the city's policy not to respond to public comments or letters. This means if a letter is written to the editor of the newspaper, neither city employees nor city council members will write a response acting in their official

capacity without direction from the council."

Corbett said he doesn't have an easy answer to how to respond to criticism.

"The hard part for me is I work for nine of you," he said. "Any time a letter is written, generally, one of you comes to me and says, 'We really need to respond to that.' I really don't pretend to know what the right way to manage that is."

Councilor Chuck Wood said the answer was hiring a public information officer, a spokesman that could "publicly position" the council on how to respond to city issues.

"There's been comments made to me, 'Well, isn't that the city manager's job? Shouldn't he be the PIO?' I don't think so. I think Robb has too much on his plate to be able to do that," Wood said.

As a longtime employee in the private sector, Councilor Tom Young agreed on the need

for a spokesman.

"I don't understand how the city does this," Young said. "I don't understand how any company can just allow the media, a citizen, whatever, to pick up the phone, call a manager and say 'Tell me about this.' I think it needs to have a focal point, there needs to be information releases and it needs to be approved by someone."

Madril said filtering all public communication through a single spokesman wouldn't be feasible, but an employee could be focused on creating an "overarching positive image" with the public.

"We don't have somebody that recognizes we're doing good work and puts it out there," Corbett said. "Or attaches the good work you do at a council meeting and puts it in a briefing that's put out to the public, so that way, when they read something in the newspaper, they can pull that up and get the city's side of what happened at the meeting."

Councilor Becky Marks said city councilors have a duty to respond to the citizenry and said she was more concerned about the city's communications being truthful and transparent than positive.

Plute took issue with being "handcuffed" when responding to criticism.

"I think that councilors should have the right to talk to their constituency and even write letters to the newspaper ... I don't think that should be taken away," he said.

Corbett said he could revise the criticism response section to only include only city employees.

Councilor McKennon McDonald said she has spoken with members of the Hermiston City Council on how they improved their image, which they attributed to assigning communication duties to the assistant city manager.

McDonald proposed giving communication duties to an employee with knowledge and

skills — and other responsibilities.

"My fear is that after you get all established, what is that person going to do for the other six hours of the day after they've updated things and kept things current and post about things?" she said. "Because I feel that there's only so much information the city can put out at one time for the community to absorb it."

With the creation of a potential position on the line and council turnover looming, Councilor Neil Brown suggested the council table the issue until some of the new councilors start their terms.

Corbett said it might be better to adopt the communication plan sooner, while the city budget is being formulated and city staff could brief new councilors on the plan once they take office.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

Anna King shares stories of the 'Daughters of Hanford'

East Oregonian

Anna King is passionate about telling the stories of women whose lives have been influenced by their work at the Hanford nuclear site.

King, the Richland, Wash., bureau chief for the Northwest News Network, spoke at the Eastern Oregon Forum Tuesday night about the "Daughters of Hanford" project.



King

Plutonium was produced at Hanford during World War II and the Cold War for atomic weapons, and has left the site — near the banks of the Columbia River north of the Tri-Cities — contaminated with more radioactive waste than any other site in the country.

This radioactive waste includes "daughter products" — formed by the decay of radioactive isotopes. These products, as well as the lives of the women involved, have been changed by Hanford.

King's 12-part radio series documents the stories of women such as Leona Woods Marshall Libby, the only woman physicist who worked at Hanford's B Reactor as part of the Manhattan Project in the 1940s, and Natalie Swan, a Yakama tribal member and biologist who is working to restore and protect the Hanford environment for future generations.

King's hope is that telling the stories of the women of Hanford will inspire girls and young women to get involved.

The "Daughters of Hanford" exhibit at the REACH interpretive center in Richland is the result of a collaboration between King, photojournalist Kai-Huei Yau, and artist and Washington State University professor Doug Gast.

On Tuesday, April 19, John Turner will speak at the Eastern Oregon Forum on "America and World post-WW II" at 7 p.m. in BMCC's Room ST-200.

Next Wednesday, April 20, Anna King will return to Pendleton to speak at the Blue Mountain Community College Arts & Culture Festival about her experiences covering the standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Harney County in January. Her presentation will be held in the Bob Clapp Theater at 1 p.m.

Woman charged for abusing memorials to the dead

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

A Boardman woman found with a pile of mementos that had been placed on six graves could face more charges than just abusing memorials to the dead.

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson said this is his first time dealing with that particular misdemeanor.

Boardman police officer George Shimer responded to a call Sunday at 8:24 a.m. of a woman "throwing stuff"

at Riverview Cemetery, 301 Columbia Ave N.E., according to Shimer's probable cause arrest affidavit. When he arrived he found Heather Marie Payne, 40, of Boardman, in the south half of the cemetery.

Payne told Shimer she was being paid to clean up her family's grave sites. He noted multiple items she had put into a pile were broken. Shimer brought in the cemetery caretaker as well as the secretary of the cemetery board and the three determined Payne removed items from six graves.

Shimer in the affidavit stated he told Payne people use the mementos to show their grief. Payne told the cop "the stuff was garbage, and that it should be illegal to put on grave sites."

Shimer then reported he watched Payne take a can of Coke that had been placed on a grave, open it and drink it.

Shimer arrested Payne for second-degree theft and six counts of abusing memorials to the dead.

Nelson said the state on Monday arraigned Payne, who pleaded not guilty. He said

there are laws for damaging headstones and graves, but abusing memorials to the dead has wider applications. He also said he argued to keep Payne in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, because she has skipped court appearances in the past.

Local circuit judges were at a conference, Nelson said, so Circuit Judge Robert Morgan of Union County presided over the case. He allowed Payne to go free. Nelson said he doubted Payne would show up for her April 28 hearing, and missing the date could lead to a felony.

BOARDMAN

Tree city celebration set for next week

ECHO — Umatilla County's first "tree city" is paying homage to the importance of trees in the run-up to Arbor Day on April 29.

Echo is currently offering a free tree to all new homeowners in the city, and paying half the cost of new trees for other residents who pre-arrange to purchase one. Trees should arrive around May 1.

The public library housed at city hall is also adding more books about trees to its collection, and each elementary school class at Echo School is being given a tree book to add to their classroom library.

On April 20 the city will hold its annual tree celebration at 12:35 p.m. downtown. The afternoon includes stations for students to learn about everything from leaf identification to forest fires, giveaways, a coloring contest and refreshments. Members of the public are also invited to participate.

The city recently installed its first tree art, part of an initiative by the Echo Art Committee. The giant metal tree was placed in front of the old service station, and a second piece of art by artist Douglas Gisi will be placed in front of the old Echo



EO file photo

Echo city manager Diane Berry, left, introduces America in Bloom judge Leslie Pittenger, right, in front of the newly christened Dorn Tree at Fort Henrietta Park in June 2015.

Hotel soon.

This year will mark Echo's 27th year as a Tree City U.S.A. Today 57 cities in Oregon have earned that designation but Echo is only one of 15 to receive a Tree Growth Award for going above and beyond the requirements for planting and maintaining trees in town.

Pot business question goes to voters

MILTON-FREEWATER (AP) — Milton-Freewater officials are allowing voters to decide whether marijuana businesses should be banned in

city limits.

The city council voted Monday to put a pot-ban measure on the Nov. 8 general election ballot. They also approved a resolution that calls for a 3 percent tax on pot sales if voters choose to lift the city's current ban.

The council's decision comes after it voted in December against changing the city's zoning laws to allow retail or medical pot dispensaries.

The city's current marijuana ban doesn't affect personal possession or growing.

Oregon adults are allowed to grow up to four plants on their

BRIEFLY

property, possess up to 8 ounces of marijuana in their homes and can carry up to 1 ounce.

Police arrest mother at courthouse

PENDLETON — A 27-year-old woman was arrested Wednesday morning at the Umatilla County Courthouse after officers say she became physically combative during a supervised visit with her 1-year-old daughter.

Undersheriff Jim Littlefield said Carlin Suzanne Sacco was visiting her daughter under the supervision of the Department of Human Services when she became irritated with the DHS case worker. Near the end of the visit, Sacco refused to give the child back and allegedly pushed and hit the worker, who sustained minor injuries.

Two security officers responded and had to physically remove the child, according to the sheriff's office. The child was not harmed. Sacco continued to struggle and argue throughout the incident, and was booked into county jail on misdemeanor charges of resisting arrest, reckless endangering, aggravated assault and obstructing governmental or judicial administration. Bail was set at \$20,000.

Mother's Day!

May 8th

Let your mother know how much she is appreciated & loved!

Publishes in the Hermiston Herald May 4th
Publishes in the East Oregonian May 7th

SAMPLE

Happy Mother's Day
For a very special mother!

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