

County budget limited by state demands

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County expects revenue to increase by 4 percent for the 2016-17 fiscal year. But Commissioner George Murdock reported the “normal increases in the cost of doing business” will eat the extra money.

Murdock delivered the budget message Wednesday morning during the county budget committee’s first hearing. He and his two fellow commissioners, Larry Givens and Bill Elfering, serve on the committee with three members of the public — Jerry Baker, Nancy Mabry and Bob Reese. Baker is the committee chairman.

Umatilla County’s 2016-17 budget is \$72 million with \$27.5 million for the general fund. Murdock said in his written budget

message the major source of revenue growth for the county comes “through grants and billing in public health and human services coupled with the overall growth in terms of the assessed value of the county.”

Umatilla County — like every county in Oregon — also faces budget hardships from the state, he said, which mandates counties take on programs and services but does not give them enough funds to cover those costs. He said the county set aside \$1.1 million to deal with the increased cost of the Public Employees Retirement System, which hits next year after the Oregon Supreme Court in 2015 overturned the Legislature’s moves to reform PERS and cut costs.

“I think it is incumbent on the Legislature to take aggressive action to resolve

this debacle,” Murdock told the committee.

The budget committee also briefly kicked the tires on the county’s commitment to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston.

“Is that going OK?” Baker asked.

“It is,” Givens replied. “Some would say it is not.”

“I’ve heard that, too,” Baker said.

Givens said the center has reached \$1.9 million of a \$2 million funding goal for construction, which now is down to “little details on the building.” And come May 13, he said, it will hold an event.

Baker also asked if the 2017 county fair would be there, and Elfering said it would.

Givens said the hope is the center will be self-sus-

taining. He said it has a leg up on that because it will be debt free.

And the budget committee also heard a recommendation to give 3 percent raises to county commissioners, the sheriff and district attorney and to increase the stipend for the district attorney by \$1,886, bringing the stipend to \$18,500.

Marie Jones, the assistant budget and finance director, said the raises for elected officials was based on past averages and comparisons to what other counties pay.

The budget hearing continues Thursday starting at 9 a.m. in room 130 at the Umatilla County Courthouse, 216 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

Umatilla County gonorrhea rates highest in state

Has increased 700 percent since 2013

East Oregonian

The Umatilla County Public Health Department reported a spike in gonorrhea cases this year with 35 cases so far, the highest rate in the state.

Confirmed gonorrhea cases have increased at a rate of 700 percent since 2013. Umatilla Public Health Director Meghan DeBolt urged sexually active individuals to protect themselves against, and screen for, sexually transmitted diseases.

“Gonorrhea is a common, sexually transmitted infection that has been seen much more frequently in the Pacific Northwest for the past three years,” DeBolt said. “The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that approximately 820,000 new gonorrheal infections occur in the U.S. each year, and that less than half of these infections are detected and reported. CDC estimates that 570,000 of these infections occur among young people between 15 and 24 years of age. In Umatilla County

many of the gonorrhea cases in the past three years have been in the 25-to-40 year age group, in addition to the younger ages.”

“Any sexually active person can become infected with gonorrhea, but many do not show symptoms,” said Riann Roggiere, communicable disease nurse for Umatilla County Public Health Roggiere, “If left untreated gonorrhea can cause infertility in both men and women. Key prevention measures include abstaining from sex or using safe sex practices.”

She urged sexually active people to get tested even if they don’t have symptoms and to get routine screenings at least yearly or more frequently as needed.

Umatilla County Public Health will screen, test and treat for a minimal fee at both Pendleton or Hermiston clinics. Insurance can be billed. There may be financial assistance for those without insurance. Call 541-278-5432 for further information or to make an appointment.

For more information go to the county health page at www.co.umatilla.or.us or www.cdc.gov/std/Gonorrhea.

HERMISTON

Outdoor School moves to Meadowood Springs

By JENNIFER COLTON
Staff Writer

In about two weeks, fifth-graders in the Hermiston School District will load up on buses with backpacks, bug repellent and sunscreen for outdoor school, an overnight, educational field trip into the mountains.

Outdoor School was revitalized in the district about 10 years ago, but this year, the longstanding program will celebrate some big changes: a new location and, in the fall, the pilot of a new season.

Since its revitalization, outdoor school has taken place at Kiwanis Cabins on the North Fork of the Umatilla River, but next month, the students will head to Meadowood Springs, according to Bryn Browning, Hermiston assistant superintendent.

The change of venue boils down to a common challenge for the Hermiston School District: enrollment. The Hermiston School District had about 475 students enrolled as of Tuesday. Each elementary school will send fifth-graders as one group; the smallest of Hermiston’s fifth-grade classes, 75 students, is at Highland Hills. In addition to the students, all fifth-grade teachers and elementary principals will join the class, along with 20 high school counselors and multiple volunteers.

“The biggest reason for changing locations is with our student growth, we have simply outgrown Kiwanis Cabins,” Browning said, adding students have stayed a mile away from the main camp, requiring buses for the daytime activities. “One of the things that we’re excited about with Meadowood is it’s a different kind of space. Meadowood has a meadow, a larger pond for



EO file photo

Sunset Elementary fifth-graders brave cold stream water to search for macroinvertebrates during an outdoor school lesson Tuesday at Kiwanis Kamp above Mission.

kayaking and paddleboats, a ropes and obstacle course built-in, trails built-in.”

Meadowood Springs is best known as a speech and hearing camp, with rental availability when the camp isn’t not in session.

This year’s fifth-graders could be the first and last class to attend Meadowood in the spring, however, as the district is also presenting a pilot program to move outdoor school from May to September. Like enrollment, the primary reason for the second change is also based on something out of the district’s control — the weather.

“We’re very lucky this year that there isn’t snow at the time we want to go,” Browning said. “We’ve had outdoor school with snow one year and then the next year it was 90 degrees at the same week.”

Three years ago, massive snow melt also wiped out the road to Kiwanis Cabin three weeks before the camp began.

Moving outdoor school to the fall also frees time

in the spring for the fifth-graders, who must juggle state testing, college introduction programs and readiness activities for the move to middle school. To help students be ready for outdoor school at the earlier time frame, the district is considering swapping the science curricula for fourth and fifth graders. Currently, the fourth-grade science curriculum focuses on earth materials, ideas and inventions while the fifth-grade program focuses on water and the planet. Switching the programs will give students a base understanding before attending outdoor school while still providing experiences applicable to the “earth materials” unit.

The district does not charge students any additional fees to participate in outdoor school, and the trip is open to all district fifth-graders. After rentals, transportation, fees and supplies, outdoor school costs the Hermiston School District about \$30,000 a year.

“Outdoor school is one of those programs that we’re

really lucky to have in the Hermiston School District because we don’t receive anything from the state for it, and we don’t charge the kids for it,” Browning said. “Some of these kids have never been into the mountains before. This is putting into practice everything they learn in a classroom. They’re in rubber boots wading in the creek, they’re actually seeing animal tracks and the different types of mosses on trees ... It’s an amazing opportunity.”

Contact Jennifer Colton at jcolton@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4534.



Photo courtesy Oregon State Police

A man was killed on Interstate 84 near milepost 219 Thursday after crashing his bike into a guardrail.

Man dies in motorcycle wreck

East Oregonian

A man is dead after wrecking his motorcycle Tuesday on Interstate 84 east of Pendleton.

Oregon State Police are working with the Walla Walla County coroner to identify the man. Authorities say he was riding eastbound on the highway at about 3:30 p.m. when, for unknown

reasons, he drifted out of the lane and hit a guardrail. He was taken by air ambulance to Saint Mary’s Hospital in Walla Walla, where he was pronounced dead.

More information will be provided as it is available. OSP was assisted on scene by Umatilla Tribal Fire and Ambulance and the Oregon Department of Transportation.

RICHLAND GUN SHOW
SHILO INN
50 Comstock St.
Apr 30-May 1
Sat. 9-5 • Sun. 9-3
FIND US ON FACEBOOK
facebook.com/scishows
www.SCIShows.com
(406) 633-9333

Elect **Jon LIEUALLEN**
Circuit Court JUDGE
• EXPERIENCED • BALANCED
• FAMILY & COMMUNITY
LIKE US

Paid For By The Committee To Elect Jon LieualLEN Judge

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!
Your Name

Turn in a photo & short message for your mom.
Runs in EO & the HH for only \$25 per spot
Contact: Stephanie Newsom
541-278-2687 • snewsom@eastoregonian.com

Your Name: _____
Phone Number: _____
Mother’s Name: _____
Message: _____

Send in, or drop by your photo and information to:
211 SE Byers, Pendleton, OR 97801
333 E. Main, Hermiston, OR 97838
or email snewsom@eastoregonian.com

EAST OREGONIAN

CLEARANCE SALE *Greg’s* HERMISTON
Thursday - Friday - Saturday
Sit...Sleep and SAVE at Greg’s
ASHLEY Were the Store your Looking for....
Sofa or Loveseat Starting at \$399.
\$399. RECLINERS Starting at
3 BIG DAY’S HUGE SAVINGS SAVE BIG
Mattress Sets
Bedroom Sets
Recliners
And More...
North Hwy 395 Cottage Plaza
Lift Chairs \$699 Starting at
12 MONTH Interest Free Financing
Min. Purchase of \$999 OAC
Greg’s Sleep Center Sofas ‘n More
Adjustable Beds
Twin XL Starting at \$999.