



Staff Photo by Jennifer Colton

Highland Hills Elementary School students watch a covered wagon move through the playground Friday. The Meyers family brought the wagon as part of the fourth grade's Oregon Trail unit.

HERMISTON

Wagons Ho: Oregon Trail runs through Highland Hills

East Oregonian

A piece of the Oregon Trail rolled to Highland Hills Elementary School on Friday as the Meyers family brought a covered wagon to help students visualize their lessons.

The fourth-grade classes at Highland Hills are currently studying the Oregon Trail, and one Highland Hills family brought down a Conestoga-esque, custom built covered wagon pulled by two Belgian draft horses, Gus and Call. Students were able to see the wagon up close and ask questions of the Meyers family. The wagon belongs to Bill and Lorre Meyers,

but three generations of the family were on hand to help with the demonstration. Both students in the family — second-grader Daniel Meyers and fourth-grader Laura Plum — dressed in pioneer clothing during the activity.

As part of the Oregon Trail unit, students have also made butter, participated in Oregon Trail scenarios and will be hand-washing clothes with washboards.

"This is something fun we do during testing, so they will test in the mornings and then have something fun to do in the afternoons," fourth-grade teacher Deanna Plum said Friday. "The kids love it."

PENDLETON

School district preps for changes at top

Peterson, Mooney leaving district

By JENNIFER COLTON
East Oregonian

The Pendleton School District office will have different faces at the top this summer, but officials hope for a smooth transition.

Both Superintendent Jon Peterson and Assistant Superintendent Tricia Mooney will be leaving the district on June 30.

A longtime educator, Peterson became the Pendleton superintendent in 2009 and will retire June 30. Ontario High School Principal Andy Kovach has been hired to replace Peterson on July 1.

Mooney has taken the assistant superintendent for human resources position across the county in the Hermiston School District. Pendleton has posted an opening for human resources director to replace Mooney, and Peterson said the district should have enough time to bring out a quality replacement before July.

The district has opted to post the opening as human resources director instead of as assistant superintendent to give the leadership team the opportunity to make that decision once replacements are established.

"The strength of a district is a leadership team. It's not any one or two people," Peterson said. "We have a very strong leadership team, and we have followed a very collaborative leadership model, which I am sure they will continue. This gives the leadership team that flexibility if they want to promote someone from within (to) assistant superintendent."

Locally, each change had a domino effect. Hermiston Deputy Superintendent Wade Smith accepted a position as the superintendent of Walla Walla Public Schools, which led Mooney to apply for his position, leaving the opening with the Pendleton School District.

In another example, Hermiston currently has an opening for a principal at Sandstone Middle School after Larry Usher accepted a position at the Hermiston School District. The Stanfield School District is also currently looking for a principal for its secondary school.

And prime hiring season for school administrators is quickly drawing to a close.

"I think that a critical step in any leadership change is that the new leadership has the opportunity to develop relationships and trust," Peterson said. "I'm confident that will be the case now in Pendleton."

Morrow County candidates talk economic development, government reorganization

Four candidates vying for two commissioner seats

By GEORGE PAVEN
East Oregonian

Candidates for the soon-to-be restructured Morrow County Court were asked if they agreed with axing the local judge position at a forum Thursday in Heppner, along with a bevy of questions about how they would address economic development.

Melissa Lindsay and Greg Sweek are running for what is now county judge, which will transition to a third part-time commissioner seat after Jan. 1, 2017. Juvenile court cases will be absorbed into circuit court, and the county hired a full-time administrative officer at the end of last year.

Lindsay told the crowd of about 50 people at Heppner City Hall that she felt it was the right move to make, having one administrator to communicate daily with department heads. Sweek, a longtime former assessor and tax collector for the county, was unable to attend the forum due to illness. The event was hosted by the Heppner Chamber of Commerce.

Incumbent Commissioner Leann Rea is also up for reelection, facing challenger Jim Doherty of Boardman. Rea, who voted in favor of reorganizing the county court, said she thinks it was an "excellent decision," and was concerned with a having a layperson preside over juvenile hearings.

"We have juveniles committing horrendous crimes," Rea said. "I think it needs to be handled at a higher level."

Doherty expressed skepticism about the changeover, saying the new administrator will not have the freedom to do what needs to be done. It is the administrator's job to serve the commissioners, and put their ideas and policies into place.

In years past, the Morrow County judge acted as both an administrator and presided over juvenile court. That is set to change as



Staff photo by George Plaven

John Ballard, left, speaks to the audience as Jon Lieuallen looks on at the Heppner Chamber of Commerce candidate's forum on Thursday in Heppner.

current Judge Terry Tallman heads into retirement. Juvenile cases will instead be handled by the Sixth District Circuit Court, which handles both Morrow and Umatilla counties.

Tying into that discussion, attorneys Jon Lieuallen and John Ballard are vying for circuit court judge and also appeared at Thursday's forum. They were asked about what they will bring to the bench, and what factors will play a role in their sentencing of criminals.

Lieuallen said there are few people who serve life sentences. Thus, rehabilitation needs to be considered so offenders are ready to reenter society.

Ballard took a harder, tough-on-crime stance, saying criminals are being coddled and questioning whether rehabilitation works.

"There are certain people who need to die in prison," Ballard said. "I have no qualms about sending someone to prison for the rest of their life."

The candidates for commissioner also responded to questions about wind energy and luring industry to both the north and south ends of the county. Lindsay, who serves on the county planning commission and has 25 years of experience in the banking business, said she would lean on her energy and ability to forge relationships. As for wind turbines,

she said officials need to consider the impacts of any new development.

"Continued development on our end of the county is something we definitely have to focus on," Lindsay said.

Rea, who is seeking a third term as commissioner, said she has already seen the benefit of wind energy dollars flowing into the county, and they are better off financially than they've ever been. She admitted she doesn't like the looks of the turbines, but "man, do I like that money."

Doherty, who runs O'Doherty Cattle Co. in Boardman, said he would not advocate for more wind farms, and said the region already has a dependable source of renewable hydro power on the Columbia

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— John Ballard, circuit court judge candidate

River. He said the county can do more to think outside the box on economic development — such as bike paths and community beautification projects that can lure in new residents and Main Street businesses.

"Economic development doesn't have to be wind towers and coal," Doherty said.

For the first time, Morrow County commission seats will be nonpartisan, lumping all candidates into one primary. Normally, the top two vote-getters would advance to the general election. But since both seats only have two candidates, the winner of both primary races will win the election, barring a successful write-in campaign.

The primary will be held May 17.

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Bank of Eastern Oregon reports first-quarter earnings

East Oregonian

First-quarter earnings for Bank of Eastern Oregon are higher in 2016 than they were in 2015, according to an announcement from parent company BEO Bancorp on Tuesday.

Net income was \$782,000, or 64 cents per share, for the quarter. That tops \$470,000, or 39 cents per share, over the same period last year. Total assets were also up 3.7 percent at \$352.3 million; net loans up 3.8 percent to \$284 million; and deposits up 3.4 percent at \$312.3 million.

President and CEO Jeff Bailey said 2016 is off to a strong year, with shareholder equity up 5.26 percent year over year. Chief Financial Officer Mark Lemmon said earnings should only get stronger as the year goes on, as the first quarter historically marks the low point in the cycle.

"As lines of credit get utilized with the 2016

growing season, we should see our loan volume increase accordingly," Lemmon said.

Bailey said they are cautiously optimistic about the prospects for farmers this year as better rains and higher snowpack could translate to better growing conditions. However, he said they recognize there's still a ways to go before harvest.

"Even with the drought of the past couple of years, our loan portfolio has performed relatively well," Bailey said.

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