

LOTS: City placed liens against all 21 sites

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years to take that action. But if they do nothing, the county can take the title in the seventh year. But in this case, a county law allows shrinking the redemption period from two years to 30 days. The law applies in certain circumstances, such as when a property could be a hazard, is abandoned or is losing value.

Olsen said Paul Chalmers, the county tax assessor, and Nancy Kerns, Pendleton city attorney, looked at the acceleration process because the Sunridge properties were losing value and the developer owed the city money for a local improvement

district that went into effect in 2011.

Chalmers, who is also a Pendleton city councilor, said the properties are not generating tax dollars and the accruing interest is eating any equity — plus this is a liability to the city. He said accelerating the redemption period is good stewardship.

Olsen said the goal is to get these properties to an auction and onto the tax rolls to generate income.

First, though, the county board of commissioners must hold a hearing. The board meets Wednesday at 9 a.m. at the Umatilla County Courthouse, Pendleton, and is looking to set

June 1 as the date for the hearing.

The city also placed liens against all 21 lots to recoup its losses for the local improvement district. Olsen said the county has to pay that off with money brought in by selling the property.

In other business, the board of commissioners on Wednesday will vote on paying \$14,502 to Ryder Election Services of Bend for 42,545 ballots for the May election.

The county as of March had 32,644 registered voters, according to Oregon Secretary of State Elections Division. County elections manager Kim Lindell said the department ordered

extra to make sure anyone who wanted a ballot had one.

The state's new motor voter registration added 680 new names to the rolls and Lindell said residents have hopped from one political party to the next, sometimes changing three or four times.

To be ready for that come election day, she said she ordered 25 percent more ballots each for Democrats, Republicans and nonaffiliated voters and 35 percent more for members of the Independent Party.

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

TRAVEL: 1 out of 8 tourists visit both the coast and Eastern Oregon

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taste of the world-famous show.

Travel Oregon CEO Todd Davidson said many in attendance were impressed with the performance and are already plotting their return to Pendleton.

Travel Oregon's conference comes as the state ramps up its tourism efforts.

During its last session, the Oregon Legislature passed a bill that increases the lodging room tax from 1 percent to 1.8 percent through 2020 before it settles into a permanent 1.5 percent rate.

Davidson said Travel Oregon will use part of that money to expand its competitive grants program from \$500,000 in the current biennium to an estimated \$6 million over the next two years. Funding organizations like Travel Pendleton can apply for those dollars.

Pendleton Chamber of Commerce Director Gail Nelson said the money will also trickle down to regional destination marketing organizations like the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association, which the chamber belongs to.

Nelson said Travel Oregon helps Eastern Oregon communities in other ways, like using its global marketing capabilities to advertise rural Oregon to an international audience.

Travel Oregon did just that when they held the Oregon Road Rally in early April, a week-long tour of the state for international tour operators that included a stop in Pendleton.

Davidson said the tour operators liked the Pendleton leg of the trip so much, they specifically said they would add the Round-Up City to their travel packages.

Davidson said many tourists take the time to explore the whole state — the commission's internal data shows one out of eight tourists visit both the coast and Eastern Oregon.

Travel Oregon has highlighted Eastern Oregon in the past, making the Painted Hills and the Wallowa Mountains two of its "seven wonders."

Although successful, Davidson said a rash of imitators in other states caused Travel Oregon to shift the focus of its marketing campaign away from the Seven Wonders and into a new slogan: "We like it here. You might too."

Linea Gagliano, Travel Oregon's communications director, said the more low-key campaign will be used to take a broader look at some of Oregon's hidden gems, specifically mentioning Pendleton's Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub.

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

CINCO: A 'multicultural' celebration for entire city to enjoy

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month. De la Cruz said after a recent tour of the site he believes there will be sufficient accommodations to host an expanded Cinco de Mayo celebration out there in 2017 even if certain elements like the rodeo arena aren't completed yet.

The 2016 event, however, will take place on Northeast Second Street across from city hall, with a carnival in the street and parking lot behind the Hermiston Public Library. The carnival will run Thursday evening through Sunday, while the rest of the festivities will kick off with a parade through downtown at 1 p.m. on Sunday. A stage with live dancing and music will be set up on Second Street in front

of city hall and food vendors will be in the parking lot across from city hall until sundown.

De la Cruz said there will be more vendors, more entertainment and more parade entries this year as the event continues to grow. He said it has also gained more sponsors over the years, including many in the agricultural community.

This year's parade grand marshal will be Hermiston High School Principal Tom Spoo.

De la Cruz said while Spoo was still principal at Armand Larive Middle School he was instrumental in starting several initiatives to involve Hispanic parents in the school. Since he became the high school principal, de la Cruz said, Spoo has been a regular attendee at

Hispanic Advisory Committee meetings and has helped put together district-wide programs such as the one that brings in volunteers to provide Spanish translation during parent-teacher conferences.

"We thought, 'Here is a person who has extended his hand to the Hispanic community, who cares about the Hispanic community,' and so we wanted to have him there," de la Cruz said.

Last year, the Cinco de Mayo celebration included a court of young women chosen to represent the Hispanic community at events like the Umatilla County Fair.

Clara Beas Fitzgerald, who organized the pageant last year, said a string of bad luck with medical issues meant there was

no one available to organize the pageant this year. Last year's winners — Sara Lomas, Hillary Fernandez, Jennifer Garcia, Maribel Marin and Brissa Gutierrez — will serve as the Cinco de Mayo court for an additional year and those that are not away at school will participate in community events.

De la Cruz called the Cinco de Mayo event (technically on Primero de Mayo this year) a "multicultural" celebration that was meant for the entire city to enjoy, regardless of their own cultural heritage.

"Everyone is invited to come and have fun," he said.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

PIERCE: Would like to repeal gas tax, low-carbon fuels mandate

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dation in January by the Oregon Cannabis Research Task Force to start a state-funded marijuana research institute. He said he also would favor using some of the tax revenue from recreational marijuana legalization to pay for the research.

Business

As a small business owner operating a medical practice, Pierce said he has experienced how government regulations have hindered business. As governor, he said, he would like to repeal laws that he believes hinders businesses such as the

gas tax and the low-carbon fuels mandate Gov. Kate Brown signed into law.

Meanwhile, he supports strengthening another Brown creation, the state's Office of Small Business Assistance, and increasing targeted investments in education.

Pierce's leadership in medical circles inspired him to enter politics.

In 2012, Gov. John Kitzhaber sought out Pierce, as head of the Oregon Medical Association, to negotiate a compromise with trial attorneys on tort reform.

"The hardest sale I ever did in my life was to take liability

reform, which was not any protection against lawsuits, and have 80 people in the room and convince them that what we had on the table ... was the way we needed to go," Pierce said.

"At the end, we won the vote by a couple of votes," he said.

Monica Wehby, a pediatric neurosurgeon who ran for the U.S. Senate in 2014 against Jeff Merkley, said she opposed the compromise and wanted more protection for physicians.

"I think he did a nice job of trying to find a solution that was beneficial to everybody," Wehby said. "Did we get everything we wanted? No, but that's negotiation. The other side

didn't either."

Wehby, who has declined to endorse a candidate in the primary, said she thinks Pierce would be a good choice for governor because of his leadership skills and his experience running a small business.

"He has a lot of respect for others' opinions, and I think a lot of that comes from being a physician," Wehby said. "You spend a lot of time listening to people and trying to come up with a diagnosis."

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