

# Wheeler County officials call on judge to resign

## Allegations against Perry referred to DOJ

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
East Oregonian

A group of local elected officials is asking Wheeler County Judge Patrick C. Perry to resign, citing "serious allegations" they say have tainted his leadership.

Seven officials submitted letters Wednesday at a special meeting of the Wheeler County Court calling for Perry's resignation, including: commissioners Lynn Morley and Robert Ordway; Treasurer Sandra Speer; County Clerk Barbara Sittion; Assessor Donald Cossitt; Justice of the Peace Robin Ordway; and Sheriff Chris Humphreys. The court also reassigned Economic Development Director Patti Jaeger from Perry's supervision to under Commissioner Morley.

The letters make reference to recent events and occurrences, but do not specify what exactly Perry is accused of doing wrong. In his letter, Sheriff Humphreys wrote that he does not take his request

lightly, but that "the extreme circumstances warrant this action."

When contacted by the *East Oregonian*, neither Humphreys nor District Attorney Daniel Ousley would comment on the allegations except to say they've been referred to the Oregon Department of Justice. A spokeswoman for the DOJ said the agency could not share any other information.

Perry told the *East Oregonian* he will not resign, and is himself unclear about the allegations. He would not discuss Jaeger's reassignment, saying it was a personnel matter. However, Jaeger was initially supervised by Morley when she first started working for the county, Perry said.

"It caught me by surprise," Perry said. "I had to end up running (Wednesday's) meeting at my own insurrection."

Perry said he still feels the public wants him to serve as judge, and he will continue to represent the county. He has served as a Wheeler County commissioner since 2007, and took office as county judge in 2013.

Contact George Plaven at [gplaven@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplaven@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0825.

## PENDLETON

# Al Plute submits his resignation

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**  
East Oregonian

Pendleton City Councilor Al Plute will officially call it quits May 17.

Plute submitted a resignation letter to the city Thursday, in which he wrote he would leave the council following its last meeting in May.

In his letter, Plute dedicated some space to talking about the city's finances, a topic he spent a lot of time and energy discussing during his time on the council.

"As you are well aware, a major source of my interest has been the budget," he wrote. "We have limited reserves and marginal possibilities for dramatic increases in revenue. At the same time, demands upon our resources will continue to grow. While we would all like to be able to deliver on a myriad of promises, these are times when local governments must focus on doing more with less."

Plute's resignation ends a five-and-a-half-year tenure that, in his words, had "high points and low points."

Plute defeated a long-time incumbent to win his seat in 2010 and ran unopposed for re-election in 2014.

Plute led the campaign to enact a 5-cent gas tax, but after voters defeated the measure last November, a group calling themselves Pendleton Citizens United started a ballot petition to

recall him.

The group dropped its campaign shortly after Plute announced his resignation in April.

Despite the political controversy toward the end of his run, Plute struck a wistful tone in parts of his letter, writing that he would remember his "unique" council experience "for the rest of my life."

"When I purchased the Brown Building in 2005, I was a point in my life when I had various options," he wrote. "I chose Pendleton and I do not regret having made that decision. While I am moving to Springfield, I will be returning regularly to attend to my business interests here."

Following Plute's departure, the council will be required to declare a vacancy and appoint his replacement as soon as possible.

Contact Antonio Sierra at [asierra@eastoregonian.com](mailto:asierra@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0836.



Plute

# Violence awareness on the line

East Oregonian



T-shirts promote awareness of domestic violence and sexual violence as part of The Clothesline Project at the Eastern Oregon Higher Education Center.

Staff Photo by Jennifer Colton

T-shirts hanging on a clothesline fluttered in the breeze outside the Eastern Oregon Higher Education Center on Wednesday and Thursday, but the clothing had less to do with laundry and more to do with awareness.

Started in 1990, The Clothesline Project is an avenue to raise awareness for violence against women.

By the end of the day, more than two dozen T-shirts filled the line in front of the building.

Blue Mountain Community College hosted the Clothesline Project in both Hermiston at the EOHEC and on the Pendleton campus.

In the United States, April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and the Clothesline Project was one way the college recognized the issues of domestic and sexual violence and worked to raise awareness and prevention.

## HERMISTON

# EOTEC open house on schedule for May 13

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
East Oregonian

The mood was celebratory Friday morning as the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center wrapped up its meeting with a discussion of preparations for the event center building's grand opening May 13.

"Hey folks, we've got a building," said board member Ed Brookshier. "We're going to be in business."

After years of work, the news that the building's punch list was completed and finishing touches like paving are on schedule was music to board members' ears. They discussed sending out invitations to various cities and community entities, but made it clear that they hoped the general public and not

just dignitaries showed up on May 13.

"We want everyone there," Brookshier said.

The open house will be Friday, May 13 from 3-7 p.m. with refreshments, entertainment, souvenirs and a short ceremony at 4:30 p.m. The access road into the EOTEC site is off of East Airport Road south of Hermiston.

The board voted to hold their next business meeting, scheduled for 7 a.m. on May 13, at the event center as well.

At Friday's meeting the board also approved a financing agreement with Banner Bank to allow donors wishing to spread large donations over two to five years to do so, while still allowing the board to access the money immediately for

construction costs. The board will only borrow money that donors have signed a contract pledging to pay.

Board Chair Byron Smith said the bank had agreed to give EOTEC a 3.1 percent interest rate with the first full payment not due until April 2018. The loan will be backed by the full faith and credit of the city of Hermiston and Umatilla County.

The board authorized borrowing up to \$730,000, which Smith said left room for a few late-coming sponsors to still take advantage of the financing option.

Fundraising committee member Nate Rivera said they have more than \$1.9 million raised, with several applications to foundations still out and "quite a few" corporations still moving

the request up their chain of command.

The board granted Rivera's request that the fundraising committee take the lead on working with the architects on design and placement of the sponsor wall to make sure it lives up to what was promised to donors. The committee will still bring options to the board for approval.

Board member Vijay Patel said the committee was to be congratulated on doing a "fantastic" job of raising so much money in just four months.

"It's the community that needs to be thanked," Rivera responded.

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

## BRIEFLY

### Council could lift EOCI work ban

PENDLETON — Officials from the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution will go before the Pendleton City Council again on Tuesday with a proposal to lift a nearly 30-year-old city ban on EOCI prisoner work crews.

EOCI Superintendent Jeri Taylor reintroduced the idea at an April 12 workshop, which was received positively by the city council.

While there's no recommended action by city staff in the agenda, City Manager Robb Corbett said the council will have the discretion to take action or not.

EOCI provided the council with an FAQ sheet at the last meeting explaining how prison crews work. According to the FAQ, the Department of Corrections uses multiple metrics to determine whether an inmate is safe to work in the community, with sex offenders and current drug users prohibited from working.

Work crews that do a job within three blocks of a school will be required to notify school officials, and the police department will

be given notice when inmate crews are working in city limits.

Unless there's an emergency, the minimum supervisor-inmate ratio for an outdoor job is 1-10.

Although work crew escapes have been rare in recent years, six inmates walked off jobs in Oregon last year, the highest number in the decade.

While many councilors vocally supported allowing work crews in Pendleton, previous attempts to lift the ban have been met with public backlash.

The council meeting will be held Tuesday at the council chambers in city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Avenue.

### Westgate land could go on market

PENDLETON — The Pendleton City Council could be ready to market a property that used to contain a mental institution to housing developers.

Councilors will consider a resolution to declare 2765 Westgate property, the former address of the Eastern Oregon Training Center, surplus property.

The move would allow the city to move forward on enticing a developer to build housing on the land, although the city will need to determine the marketing criteria and the property value later.

After EOTC and the Blue Mountain Recover Center closed, the Oregon

Legislature agreed to demolish the structures and deed the land to the city for economic development purposes.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to [news@eastoregonian.com](mailto:news@eastoregonian.com)

**Murder Mystery Dessert**

**AGAPE HOUSE PRESENTS:**

**Murder Among The Lavender**

Where: 500 Harper Rd. • Hermiston  
When: May 8th @ 6:00pm  
Cost: \$25 per person

Murder Mystery & Dessert Fundraiser for Agape House  
For tickets, call Dave @ 541-567-8774

**MOTHER'S DAY IS MAY 8TH**  
ORDER EARLY

*Cottage Flowers* llc

Put a smile on the heart with the power of flowers.

Mon-Sat 8am-6pm  
Sun 12pm-5pm

HWY 395  
HERMISTON  
541-567-4305

[www.cottageflowersonline.com](http://www.cottageflowersonline.com)

**4th Annual Cruisin' For Scholarships**

It Does Good Things™

**Saturday, May 7th 9am-2pm**

BMCC Central Lawn | 2411 NW Garden | Pendleton, Oregon 97801

A car, truck and motorcycle show with proceeds benefiting the BMCC Diesel Technology Program and student scholarships.

Any make, model, year or type of vehicle may enter!

Car Registration: \$20, includes dash plaque and first 50 entries receive complimentary goodie bag. Registration begins at 8:30am or register online prior to event at [www.bluecc.edu/alumni](http://www.bluecc.edu/alumni).

Web registration fees will be collected at event day check-in.

**Raffles, Music, BBQ, Prizes and more!**

Blue Mountain Community College  
**FOUNDATION**

**CONCEALED CARRY PERMIT CLASS**

Oregon - Utah - Valid 35 States

**PENDLETON**  
Red Lion Inn: 304 SE Nye Ave.  
May 20th • 1:00 pm & 6:00 pm

**Walk-Ins Welcome!**

OR/Utah: (Valid in WA) \$80.00 or Oregon only: \$45  
[www.FirearmTrainingNW.com](http://www.FirearmTrainingNW.com) • [FirearmTrainingNW@gmail.com](mailto:FirearmTrainingNW@gmail.com)  
**360-921-2071**