

County looks to shift watermaster jobs to state

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County is working on a deal to transfer its watermaster division to the Oregon Water Resources Department. The proposal comes as the county board of commissioners vote Wednesday morning on the 2016-17 budget.

County Commissioner Bill Elfering is heading up the county's end of the bargain. He said while the county hires and pays for a watermaster division, its employees effectively work for the state and the county no longer wants to operate under that model.

The water resources department oversees water law. The department's staff helps provide water users with information, but its field offices with watermasters and assistant watermasters work as the effective boots

on the ground to administer and enforce water laws. Department director Tom Byler said in some ways those employees in the field are the referees that bring law and order to water use.

Umatilla County's irrigated agriculture, Byler said, is "perhaps the most highly administered and complex water distribution in the state." The county's support for the watermaster division, he said, is vital.

The county budget committee proposed slashing the \$228,000 division with five full-time employees to \$158,000 and 2.5 full-time employees. Elfering said that proposal is on hold and the board plans to look at a resolution Wednesday to give funds to the state to pay the remaining 2.5 salaries.

"So it will be a budget allocation rather than providing employees," Elfering said.

Byler said the department

has similar agreements with other counties and is more than willing to make county employees state employees, but financing that is an issue because the state's two-year budget cycle does not begin until July 1, 2017.

The county will need to pay the positions until at least next summer in order to ensure those referees stay in the local water game. Byler said he was sure the county and state "can get this going in the right direction."

County commissioners are not looking to apply this plan to the district attorney's office, even though the district attorney is a state employee while his staff and deputy prosecutors are county employees. Elfering said the difference is the district attorney's office operates in the county courthouse along with the board of commissioners and most other county departments,

whereas the watermaster workers are in the field.

Elfering also said the county's \$228,000 for the Oregon Water Resources Department is the highest cost for any county in the state, and that raises questions of determining how much support the county should be giving. He said the Association of Counties, which held its spring conference earlier this week in Pendleton, plans to have a broad discussion of this issue in its water policy committee.

Umatilla County Commissioner Larry Givens is the president of the county association's board of directors. Elfering said it would take months before any suggestions are announced.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners meets Wednesday at 9 a.m. in room 130 at the county courthouse, 216 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton.

BRIEFLY

Police: Woman shot man with stun gun over debt

PENDLETON — Sarah Marie Carr of Pendleton is in jail on initial felony charges stemming from an April incident.

Pendleton police arrested Carr, 24, on Sunday on a warrant for menacing, second-degree kidnapping, assault and first- and second-degree use of a stun gun. Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said a secret Umatilla County grand jury indicted Carr, which led to the arrest warrant.

Pendleton police on April 24 received a 9-1-1 report from a man who claimed Carr was going to pay him the money she owed. But instead of cash, she took him to a field outside Pendleton and shot him with a stun gun, then left him.

Roberts said Pendleton police found Carr and the victim were familiar and had some discrepancy over money, and she led the man to believe she was taking him to receive cash reimbursement for property.

When they got out in the county Carr tried to stun the man with an electric stun device, Roberts said, and another man in the vehicle may have brandished a small baseball bat, though police never recovered one. The police chief also said another man drove the vehicle, but Carr may have duped him about what was going on as well.

Putting together all the pieces of this crime puzzle took some time, Roberts said, and now Carr is in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, in lieu of \$200,000 bail.

Teen charged in Boardman stabbing now in local jail

PENDLETON — The Idaho teen facing charges for stabbing a woman at a rest stop near Boardman is now in the Umatilla County Jail.

Talon James Davis was 17 when Oregon State Police arrested him May 14 in the wake of the attack on the 51-year-old woman who suffered non-life threatening injuries. Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson charged Davis with second-degree assault and unlawful use of a weapon. The assault charge falls under Oregon mandatory minimum sentencing law and carries a prison term of at least five years, 10 months.

Davis pleaded not guilty and was in the juvenile facility at the Northern Oregon Regional Correctional Facilities, The Dalles.

He turned 18 on Friday, however, and was transferred to the Pendleton jail.

Court records show his court-appointed defense attorney, Jeff Wallace, filed a motion at the end of May to consider Davis's fitness to participate in his own defense. The hearing is Thursday at 8:15 a.m.

Local libraries offer summer reading programs

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

Area libraries are gearing up for summer reading programs, with many featuring activities for all ages.

Area library workers said the programs help maintain skills learned in school. Umatilla library assistant Pam Johnson said the programs also offer fun activities, including games and crafts.

"Let's get our children off to a good start for the next school year by helping encourage them to read this summer," said Erin Wells, Milton-Freewater library director.

Area programs include:

PENDLETON

The summer reading program will get a sizzling start with the Pioneer Potluck Picnic. The family potluck event is Saturday, June 25 from 1-3 p.m. at Heritage Station Museum, 108 S.W. Frazer Ave., Pendleton. People are invited to bring a dish to share and participate in old-fashioned games.

Also, be sure to register the whole family for the summer reading program at the picnic or the library.

The Pendleton Public Library is located at 502 S.W. Dorion Ave. For more information, call 541-966-0380 or visit www.pendletonlibrary.weebly.com.

HERMISTON

The Hermiston Public Library is offering programs for children, teens and adults. Registration begins Monday, June 20 at 11 a.m. for kids and noon for teens (they can also register online). Tote bags will be given away, while supplies last. Adults don't need to register, but they can stop by the library to grab a packet.

Children and youths are encouraged to participate as often as possible in order to receive an invitation to the Friday, July 29 pool party at the Hermiston Family



Amy Warner registers her children, Quinn and Avery, for the 2015 Hermiston Public Library summer reading program.

Aquatic Center.

The Hermiston Public Library is located at 235 E. Gladys Ave. For more information, call 541-567-2882 or visit www.hermistonlibrary.us.

MILTON-FREEWATER

Every Child is an Artist is the theme of the summer program at the Milton-Freewater Public Library. Open to children from birth through sixth grade, it offers unique art activities each week.

The program began Tuesday and continues through mid-August. Participants will receive a log to keep track of their reading hours. Children are encouraged to participate with a chance to win prizes, including a scooter and helmet, a large doll house and a Barbie convertible, a Black & Decker tool bench, train table, Star Wars prize pack, a guitar and keyboard set, and three \$75 gift certificates to Inland Octopus.

The Milton-Freewater Public Library is located at 8 S.W. Eighth Ave. For more information, call 541-938-8246 or visit www.mflibrary.weebly.com.

STANFIELD

The summer reading program kicks off Friday at 6 p.m. with a visit by Ronald McDonald at the Stanfield Public Library. Youths up to eighth grade can register for the program at the kick-off event or the following week.

Activities are available Monday through Fridays beginning at 11 a.m. at the library. Also, a free lunch is provided at noon. The program concludes with a celebration Monday, July 25 at Coe Park in Stanfield.

The Stanfield Public Library is located at 130 W. Coe Ave. For more information, call 541-449-1254 or visit www.facebook.com/Stamfield-Public-Library-165277506891547.

UMATILLA

The Umatilla Public Library's summer program runs in July. Signups are accepted all day Friday, July 1 and Tuesday, July 5. Activities start Wednesday, July 6 at the library.

Most of the activities are geared for elementary and middle school students, Johnson said. A program

offering ice cream for reading is open to all ages, including high school students.

A pair of programs coming up include "Vladimir Goes for Gold," a Traveling Lantern Theater production, which is Thursday at 3 p.m.; and the Dragon Theater Puppets, which is Friday, June 24 at 2 p.m.

The Umatilla Public Library is located at 700 Sixth St. For more information, call 541-922-5704 or visit www.facebook.com/umatillapubliclibrary.

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539

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