

PENDLETON

Council approves 10 percent discount on utilities

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

The city of Pendleton will apply a 10 percent water and sewer discount to low- and fixed-income residents starting Aug. 1.

Now they need to figure out how to tell people about it.

Applicants will be screened for the new program through nonprofits Helping Hand and Community Action Program of East Central Oregon, where employees will determine whether a household earns 125 percent or less of federal governmental poverty guidelines.

This was exactly the kind of language Councilor Becky Marks didn't want to use when advertising the program.

Occasionally banging her fists against the dais when speaking, Marks said any mention of poverty would deter proud fixed-income residents from accessing the program. And she balked at the suggestion of CAPECO discussing the program at the senior center.

"They know CAPECO is for poor people," Marks said.

Councilors Tom Young and John Brenne also said the program would scare off fixed-income residents in need of assistance.

Instead of promoting the program requirements with poverty guidelines, City Manager Robb Corbett said the city could use income brackets to notify residents whether they're eligible for the program.

Councilor Chuck Wood said a one-person household making 125 percent of the poverty guideline would earn \$14,850 per year, two people \$20,250 and would continue to go up from there based on household size.

The council approved the discount, 6-2, with a request to create a public awareness campaign for the program. Young and Brenne voted against the resolution.

City staff developed the program to help mitigate the effects of a \$7 per month increase in water and sewer costs and a \$5 per month street utility fee.

The council also amended the city's transportation plan to include an update focusing on bike and pedestrian paths.

The council voted 6-2 to pass the amendment, with Young and Marks voting against.

At the council's next meeting, it will vote on amending the city's unified development code to incorporate the updated transportation plan.

Climate change educator has hope

PENDLETON — After being a self-described fence-sitter on global warming, Peter Haug began researching the topic and taking online courses on the subject.

Since then, the retired journalist, systems ecologist and veteran ESL teacher in China, has become a climate change educator. Over the last year, Haug also has given talks at libraries and service organizations. Haug will present Beyond Climate Change: A Climate of Hope Tuesday at 6 p.m. in the Pendleton City Hall community room, 501 S.W. Emigrant Ave. The free event will include a group discussion.

Haug continues to learn more about the rapidly changing science behind climate change. His talks are designed to help interested persons better understand the practical implications of climate change. His main focus is on what individuals and groups can do about mitigating climate change and working to reverse its global ramifications.

For more information, contact Ruth Hall at 541-429-0614.

HERMISTON



Photo contributed by Silvia Rondon.

Sapinder Bali discusses ongoing research into nematode resistance in potatoes during the annual potato field day at the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center.

Nematodes nemesis of potato farmers

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Potato breeders at Oregon State University are hot on the tail of a microscopic parasite lurking in farms across the Columbia Basin.

Columbia root-knot nematodes might be too small to see with the naked eye, but they can cause noticeable damage to spuds if left unchecked. The faculty at OSU's Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center is now working to identify the gene that makes certain potatoes resistant to nematodes, which could then be used to create new varieties.

Sapinder Bali, a postdoctoral scholar with the HAREC plant breeding program, is part of a team developing molecular markers for the nematode-resistance gene in potatoes. She discussed their progress during the station's annual potato field day Wednesday.

Nematodes infect both the roots and tubers of potato plants, which can stunt their growth or kill them altogether. By developing a set of molecular markers, Bali said researchers will be able to scan potatoes at the DNA level to find which varieties are resistant and which are susceptible to nematodes.

"These markers can help breeders to confirm the resistant varieties before crossing for choosing right parents and evaluating the segregating populations with higher confidence," according to the project summary.

That gives breeders like Sagar Sathuvalli a leg up on creating new varieties designed to save farmers money. Sathuvalli works with the Tri-State Potato Breeding Program with Oregon, Washington and Idaho. It takes a minimum of 12 years and thousands of samples before new varieties are ready for commercial release, he said.

The program did release three new varieties earlier this year, including Jester, Cheshire and Vermilion. Three others are also in the works. Sathuvalli said breeding is done primarily for resistance to pests like nematodes and diseases like Verticillium wilt and potato virus Y.

"Our goal is to identify those genes responsible for resistance," he said.

Other field day presentations included updates on tiny Lygus bugs as a potential vector for disease, as well as efforts to monitor aphids in fields. The goal of HAREC field days is to provide the latest information on growing tools and techniques to make local farmers as efficient and profitable as they can.

Station Director Phil Hamm said HAREC is now home to 15 center-pivot irrigation systems for their fields, mostly due to the generosity of supporters. A new Blue Mountain Community College Precision Irrigation Agriculture building is also under construction.

"It just keeps getting bigger and bigger," Hamm said. "I don't think you can go anywhere where they have more faculty doing more with potatoes than we have here."

Umatilla schools summer feeding program begins

UMATILLA — The Umatilla School District summer feeding program has begun. Throughout the summer months kids can eat for free breakfast, lunch and dinner.

McNary Heights Elementary will serve three meals a day, Monday through Friday. Breakfast runs from 8 to 9 a.m., lunch will be served from 11 a.m. to noon, and dinner will be available from 4:30 to 5:30

p.m. Umatilla High School will offer breakfast and lunch Monday through Friday as well, with breakfast from 8 to 9 a.m. and lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Lunch will be served Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to noon at South Hill Park. From 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Marina Park and from noon to 1 p.m. at Kiwanis Park

next to the McNary Market.

Meals also are available for adults for a fee. Breakfast is \$1, lunch is \$2 and dinner will cost an adult \$3.

The summer menu can be found on the Umatilla School District website.

PILOT ROCK

Budget passed, rates raised, pot banned

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Pilot Rock City Council passed its budget Tuesday night, increased sewer rates and checked another box banning marijuana businesses from the town.

Those were among several votes the council cast at its second meeting of the month.

The council approved a 2016-17 budget just shy of \$2 million with a tax rate of \$2.8958 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The budget also took into account an increase in sewer rates to pay for new wastewater lagoons. The council, in a separate vote, approved raising rates 25 percent.

That bumps up residential rates \$7 to \$41.36 a month. The council, though, did not raise the low-income rate of \$19.93 a month.

The council also adopted the facility plan for the new wastewater system, which the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality already approved, and voted in favor of giving the city the authority to issue wastewater system revenue bonds.

Teri Porter, the city recorder, explained the U.S. Department of Agriculture required the bond as part of the deal to provide the funding for the new wastewater lagoons.

Councilors also OKed increasing the public safety surcharge from \$3 a month to \$3.50. And the council voted for the new recreational park ordinance.

Porter said no one is building a park at this time, but there has been interest in the idea, and now the city has guidelines in case someone does want to build an RV park.

The council also amended the zoning ordinance to prohibit marijuana-related businesses. The council already nixed having the businesses operate in the city. Changing the zoning code is another measure to ensure banning sales of marijuana and marijuana-related products.

And local internet service provider Wtechlink Inc. received a telecommunications franchise from the city. Wtechlink is running fiber optic cable in Pilot Rock, and the franchise grants the company the right to build, operate and maintain a telecommunications network in the city limits. Wtechlink must pay a franchise fee equal to 7 percent of revenues from providing services in the town.

Porter, who fills a lot of roles in the local government, will get to go on vacation in July. The council voted to approve that request as well.

Pilot Rock City Council next meets July 5.

Speeder and crasher end up in jail for dui

East Oregonian

Two men with suspended licenses ended up in jail after getting the attention of Oregon State Police troopers Tuesday night in separate incidents.

State police reported a trooper was westbound on Interstate 84 near milepost 208 around 8:30 p.m. when a silver Dodge Caravan zoomed up from behind. The trooper checked the speed of the Dodge at 86 mph and pulled it over.

The driver, Mario Ivan Alferéz, 26, of Pendleton, showed "indicators of impairment indicative of controlled substance use," according to state police. After a sobriety test, the trooper arrested him for driving under the influence of intoxicants.

A search of the Dodge revealed marijuana pipes, marijuana, and small plastic bags "containing a crystal residue," which the trooper tested positive for methamphetamine. The trooper took Alferéz

to the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, for the dui and possession of methamphetamine and driving while suspended.

A second trooper arrested a Walla Walla man after a crash Tuesday night near Milton-Freewater.

Antonio Meza-Ibarra, 39, was southbound on Highway 339 in a Nissan Altima when he lost control a little before 11 p.m. near West Crockett Road, drove through a front yard and crashed into a fence.

The trooper contacted Meza-Ibarra, according to state police, and he showed signs of impairment. The homeowner and the passenger said Meza-Ibarra was behind the wheel, though the state already suspended his license for previously driving drunk. He refused a breath test this time.

Police booked Meza-Ibarra into the county jail on charges of dui (alcohol), driving while suspended/revoked, reckless driving and recklessly endangering another person.

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to all of you who supported the consolidation of the two districts. As Umatilla County Fire District #1, we will do all we can to provide you with the fire and emergency medical service you deserve.
We look forward to serving you for many years.

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