

DETECTIVE: Will oversee sex offender registration

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said there was no program on the opposite end to round up offenders that flee, and often they ended up back in custody after creating new problems.

Rowan said having a detective working on those absconders should reduce their time at large and thus lead to a reduction in new crimes.

“Through this process we can have another set of eyes and ears out here every day those people are out,” said Rowan.

The county also will use the new position to oversee registration of sex offenders. Primmer said current policy is that offenders leaving the county jail must go to the nearby office of Oregon State Police on Airport Hill, Pendleton, to register.

Some offenders, though, do not follow through. Primmer said keeping the registration in-house will reduce that.

And Rowan said hiring a new

detective gives the sheriff’s office an extra hand during a major crime team event or staff shortages.

The sheriff’s office has four deputies joining its patrol staff this summer — two new graduates from the 16-week basic police course at the Oregon Public Safety Academy, Salem, and two veteran officers from other police agencies. Rowan said that brings the patrol units to a total of 14. And this hire in Community Justice would increase the detective ranks to four.

The county is advertising the detective job on its website with a starting salary of \$3,792 a month. Rowan said applicants from outside Umatilla County law enforcement could also qualify for a signing bonus up to \$8,000. The county has been using the bonuses since October, and Rowan said it is drawing veteran officers to his agency.

Primmer said the state’s Justice Reinvestment funds and the departure of some senior staff gave his

department’s budget the financial boost needed to pay for the new position. And the sheriff’s office will reimburse the Community Justice Department whenever it uses the detective.

Primmer and Rowan said a memorandum of understanding will shape the agreement, and the new position needs policy and procedures to outline the scope of the work with the separate law enforcement agencies. The two law agency heads also said the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners will have to approve the deal.

Primmer said he knocked this idea around with other county parole and probation heads in the state, but no one else is trying it. The experiment has the practical effect of targeting known offenders on the street, Primmer said, and work as an accountability measure.

If you are on parole and probation and take off, he said, you know someone will be looking for you.

HOUSING: More workers needed to keep up with a rise in organic farming

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wanted to add housing for 200 to 800 seasonal farmworkers under the federal government’s H-2A visa program.

Myers said the workers would have come from Mexico and Central America, staying for a period of six to eight months before returning home. Farms are required to provide H-2A workers with free housing and a minimum wage of \$12.69 per hour in Oregon and Washington.

Threemile Canyon already has 300 year-round employees, but Myers said more workers are needed to keep up with a rise in organic farming. The number of organic acres on the farm has increased from 200 to 7,500 since 2002, and organic practices tend to be much more labor intensive — especially when it comes to controlling weeds.

“We can’t use herbicides,” Myers said. “We are challenged with finding the labor to make that organic farming successful.”

Housing would have been built on land purchased from the city of Boardman, across from the Boardman Airport. The Morrow County Planning Commission voted 5-1 to recommend rezoning the land from Space Age Industrial to Exclusive Farm Use, and allow for an exception on extending wastewater to the site.

Still, the proposal rankled nearby property owners who objected to the location and argued the application left too many unanswered questions. Raymond Akers, who lives on Paul Smith Road, said he belongs to a labor union and believes the jobs at Threemile Canyon could be filled by the local and regional workforce.

Akers said he was also concerned about the potential increase in traffic on Tower Road, and the ability for police to handle another 800 people just outside city limits. Boardman’s total population is 3,379, according to the most recent census.

Kelly Doherty, wife of Morrow County Commissioner-elect Jim Doherty, was prepared to ask for the application to be remanded back to the planning commission, arguing that key points about the development were not considered in the original recommendation.

After the meeting, Doherty said she was shocked by Threemile Canyon’s decision to pull the proposal.

“We were prepared to appeal it,” she said. “You get emotional but in the end, it’s a process.”

Other objections were filed by Laurie Hoefer, farmworker program director for Legal Aid Services of Oregon; Leslie Ann Hauer, a planning consultant based in the Tri-Cities; and even the U.S. Navy, which cautioned against the development possibly being incompatible with the nearby Boardman Bombing Range.

Ultimately, Myers said the farm would withdraw its plan and take a different approach.

“We’ll get the smartest people on it to help us work through (the issues),” he said.

Jim Doherty said there is still a need for additional housing — including farmworker housing — in Boardman, and he looks forward to working with Threemile Canyon on finding solutions once he takes office.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

SUPPLIES: Hermiston Wal-Mart donated roughly \$10,000 worth of supplies to area schools last year

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said Pendleton Superintendent Andy Kovach. “At the elementary schools this is usually through the principal while at the middle and high schools it’s normally handled through the counseling office. Every effort is made to ensure every student has the supplies they need.”

The Hermiston Wal-Mart donated an estimated \$10,000 worth of supplies to area schools last year, according to co-manager Abby Harris. In addition, large boxes are set out for the public to donate supplies they purchase in-store, or customers can purchase a backpack with

basic supplies to give to a child in need.

Office Max in Hermiston offers customers the opportunity to donate five percent of their purchase to the local school of their choice.

“We also purchase class sets of shared items to ensure students without the entire list are still able to succeed in school,” said Heidi Sipe, the Umatilla School District superintendent. “A few years ago, we refined our lists after asking teachers to price out a class list and take a look at the cost. This allowed staff to really narrow down the lists to what’s necessary and eliminated a lot of optional type items.”

Altrusa sets school supply drive

PENDLETON — Some area students and their families have a difficult time coming up with extra money for school supplies.

Altrusa International of Pendleton and Pacific Power are trying to help fill the gap. A School Supply Drive is planned to help raise money and collect basic supplies to provide to local students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Volunteers will accept donations Saturday Aug. 6 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at a pair of Pendleton stores: Wal-Mart, 2203 S.W. Court Ave., and Bi-Mart, 901 S.W. Emigrant Ave.

Supplies needed include pens, pencils, crayons, loose-leaf paper, notebooks, colored pencils, glue sticks, scissors, pencil boxes and backpacks. In addition, clothing items can be donated, including sweats, leggings, T-shirts, underwear and socks in sizes 6-10.

For those unable to donate items, cash is appreciated to assist in purchasing supplies. For more information, call Buffy Farber at 541-969-2390.



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