

HERMISTON

Police arrest transient for rape

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Hermiston police arrested a local transient for first-degree rape.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston in a written statement said Reynardo Mendoza Barrera, 35, committed an "incredibly heinous act."

Hermiston officers Tuesday around 10:35 a.m. responded to a possible domestic assault in progress at an apartment complex on the 200 block of Southeast Third Street, Edmiston reported, and police there detained Barrera.

"Despite having been previously trespassed from the property, Barrera had illegally gained access to the apartment of a female known to him," noted Edmiston.

Officers took Barrera to the Hermiston Police Department, where detectives with the department and Oregon State Police questioned him. Edmiston

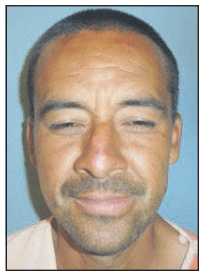
reported that led to Barrera's arrest for the rape and first-degree trespassing.

He also stated the investigation continues, so other charges could be coming. And Hermiston police requested assistance from the local Domestic Violence Services, Inc., and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Umatilla County Circuit Court records show Barrera has faced lower-level charges since 2012, including mischief, resisting arrest and trespassing, but nothing as serious as first-degree rape, which falls under Oregon's mandatory minimum sentencing law.

Edmiston said for that reason he is deferring the release of other information to the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office.

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



Barrera

PILOT ROCK

Council seeks answers before deeding bike pit

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Pilot Rock City Council revved up Tuesday night over giving the motocross and ATV park to the nonprofit that operates events there.

For now, the city will keep the 60-acre site dubbed my locals as The Bike Pit. But answers from a lawyer could change that.

Previous city councils discussed deeding the park on the town's northwest corner to the Pilot Rock OHV Inc. board to avoid liability. The council Tuesday night after some discussion voted 6-0 in favor of declaring the site surplus property, the first step toward transferring the land.

But actually deeding the land became contentious. Councilor Deacon Perkins raised several questions about the transaction. Language in the deed allows the city to assume ownership of The Bike Pit if the nonprofit dissolves, but he asked if the city also would have to assume its debt. He wanted to know why the city would want it back, what the city gains for giving away the land, and how this would change the relationship with the park's board.

Public works director

Steve Draper is the chairman of the park. The nonprofit has invested thousands of dollars into fencing at the site and also handles maintenance. The goal, he said, is to hold big motocross rallies at the park.

That fired up Councilor Raymond Doherty.

"You've been working at this for 10 years," he barked. "And you haven't brought in any races so far."

Draper and Jackie Carey, also on OHV Inc., howled right back about the value of the park to the community, and city recorder Teri Porter defended the park for its potential economic benefit.

Councilors and staff also squabbled over the city and park board splitting about \$2,100 in survey and legal fees for the cost of deed.

Mayor Virginia Carnes said The Bike Pit has "jumped through every hoop it had to" and she supports its vision, even though its board voted her off due to the possible conflict that could arise if she signed over the deed.

The council voted 5-1 to table the matter until its meeting on Aug. 16. Councilor Bob Deno was the dissenting vote. The council also directed staff to find answers to some of Perkins' questions.

PENDLETON

County takes step toward sale of foreclosed lots

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County took the first step Wednesday toward the sale of 21 foreclosed lots in Pendleton.

The barren sites at the Sunridge Estates housing development off Tutuilla Road have tax bills of \$5,000-\$7,000 and have been in foreclosure since January.

The city of Pendleton also has liens against the lots because the developer has not paid for a local improvement district that went into effect in 2011.

Property owners usually can "redeem" property if they pay taxes owed in full within two years. But county law allows shrinking the redemption period from two years to 30 days for sites that are hazardous, abandoned or losing value — such as these 21 lots.

Umatilla County Board of Commissioners held a

public hearing Wednesday morning at the county courthouse, 216 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton, to consider the fast-track redemption. Paul Chalmers, the county tax assessor and Pendleton city councilor, told the board this is about "trying to stop the bleeding from the LID side" so the lots do not continue to plummet in value. No one else spoke during the hearing.

Commissioner Bill Elfering during deliberations said it made sense to try and keep value in the land. He and Commissioner Larry Givens voted to accelerate the redemption period. Commissioner George Murdock was absent.

County attorney Doug Olsen said the lots could go to auction as soon as mid-September. Chalmers said there is a lot of interest in the lots, so he would like to see the county sell these as quick as possible.

PENDLETON

Penninger gets sworn in

Becomes fire department's assistant chief

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Shawn Penninger passed his first Pendleton test years before he accepted the job as the Pendleton Fire Department's assistant chief/fire marshal.

Penninger, 42, has made a half-dozen trips to Pendleton since he moved to Oregon more than two years ago, including a visit to the 2014 Round-Up.

A deep affinity for Western culture doesn't seem typical for a guy from the heart of Illinois corn country, but a love of horses has long drawn Penninger and his family out west.

Penninger has spent most of his career as a firefighter for the Air National Guard, living in Pekin, Illinois while working on a base in nearby Peoria.

Seeking career advancement opportunities, Penninger and his family moved to the Oregon Air National Guard base in Portland, where he eventually



Photo by Antonio Sierra

Shawn Penninger, right, is sworn as the assistant chief/fire marshal for the Pendleton Fire Department by Mayor Phillip Houk at a city council meeting Tuesday.

rose to the chief position. Penninger said each National Guard is like its own gated community, each with its own fire department that responds to emergencies.

But Penninger longed to return to a more rural lifestyle and working for a department that was more enmeshed in the community. "I have a big pickup truck," he said. "I can't park it anywhere in Portland but I can park it everywhere in Pendleton."

When the assistant chief/fire marshal position opened up following Matt

Benedict's departure for a chief job in Cannon Beach, it didn't hurt that Pendleton was horse-friendly.

Since Penninger's wife has a degree in equine science and both of his daughters are involved in junior rodeo, Penninger had long looked to towns like Pendleton and Cheyenne, Wyoming for the next step in his career.

Pendleton also had a fire department with a set of challenges that Penninger wanted to take on, like the ever-increasing number of health calls the department

responds to and the need for a new station.

While there were other qualified candidates who applied for the position, Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo said Penninger stood out for his intelligence, aptitude and room for growth — all traits that would lend themselves well to replacing Ciraulo if the need arises.

Although serving as the second in command might seem like a step down, Penninger said he'd rather be a part of progressive fire department rather than remain stagnant.

Fire marshal services will be Penninger's other role in the fire department, meaning fire prevention and code enforcement will be some of his main duties.

"In an ideal world, I'd put the fire department out of business," he said.

Penninger's first day of work was Monday and he was sworn in by Mayor Phillip Houk Tuesday, meaning he missed involvement in the Weigh Station Fire near Meacham but will be on scene for a controlled burn on South Hill on Friday.

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



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Paramedics from Umatilla County Fire District 1 treat victims at the scene of a crash Wednesday evening in the 400 block of Northeast Fourth Street, Hermiston.

HERMISTON

Three juveniles suffer serious injuries in crash

East Oregonian

Three juveniles suffered serious injuries Wednesday night when a car crashed into them at the intersection of Fourth Street and Wilshire in Hermiston.

According to Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston, the three minors that were hit by the car were taken to Good Shepherd Hospital, Hermiston, but their injuries were not life-threatening.

Edmiston said no further information was available, but the incident is under further investigation.

The collision occurred at about 6:45 p.m.

BRIEFLY

Driver leaves scene of rollover

HERMISTON — The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office is trying to piece together who was in a pickup that crashed Wednesday near Hermiston.

Umatilla County dispatch received a call at 9:50 a.m. Wednesday morning regarding a single vehicle rollover north of Hermiston. A witness said two young females emerged from a wrecked pickup, shaken but uninjured. Neither female was on scene when Umatilla County sheriff's deputy Jason Post arrived.

Post was unable to comment on who the driver was, if there were any injuries or whether anyone had been transported to a hospital.

The pickup was a dark green Ford F250 and appeared to have been turning left off North Ott Road onto East Bensenel Road when the driver lost control. The pickup rolled down a short embankment and into a field of pumpkins.

Music camp crescendos with public recital

PENDLETON — A free concert featuring participants in Oregon East Symphony's Summer Strings Music Camp is open to the public.

The recital is Friday at 5 p.m. at Peace Lutheran Church, 210 N.W. Ninth St., Pendleton. Ensembles will



Staff photo by Alexa Lougee

Umatilla County Sheriff's Office deputy Jason Post examines a pickup that was involved in a single vehicle rollover near Hermiston Wednesday.

be directed by camp staff, including Loree Tucker McKenna, camp director; Beau Benson, symphony conductor; Lisa Robertson, symphony concertmaster; and camp instructors Melinda Tovey, Emma Knight, Kari Giorgi, Haval Norman and Tasha Sitz.

For more information, contact McKenna at 541-276-4237 or loree5645@gmail.com.

Tractor show benefits Kick'n Cancer

ECHO — Modern and antique tractors and farm equipment will be on display this weekend in Echo.

Sponsored by Echo Ridge Cellars Winery, the second annual Old Time Tractor Show is Saturday from noon to 5 p.m. at 551 N. Thielsen St., Echo. The entry fee is \$5 with proceeds going to Kick'n Cancer, which supports area

residents fighting cancer. The event also features live entertainment.

To register or for more information, contact 541-376-8100, info@echoridgecellars.com or visit www.facebook.com.

Book club meets August 10

HERMISTON — "Circling the Sun" by Paula McLain will be discussed during the upcoming Hermiston Public Library book club meeting.

Bookminders meet the second Wednesday of the month. The upcoming meeting is Wednesday, Aug. 10 at 11:30 a.m. at The Pheasant Bar & Grill, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston.

Widows, widowers invited to barbecue

PENDLETON — A barbecue is planned during an upcoming gathering of WW.Friends.

The group, which is open to widows and widowers, meets monthly to share friendship and fun. It's not designed as a support group.

All area widows and widowers are invited to attend the group's fifth annual barbecue. The event is Wednesday, Aug. 10 at 5:30 p.m. at 511 N.W. Eighth St., Pendleton.

For more information, call 541-276-4708 or 541-276-2790.

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