

JAIL: Population grew from 140 inmates a day before Rowan to 220 a day in July

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Pendleton police records show the jail is letting out some inmates in less than 36 hours, some even the same day as their arrest.

Rowan defended his actions Friday, noting that the jail is "currently housing more inmates than ever before." He said the average daily population is 212, and his policy has "undeniably benefited the criminal justice system and the community."

The *East Oregonian* has published Rowan's lengthy response online in its entirety.

The matrix, as cops called it, was a system the jail used to first release the least dangerous offenders when the population hit a certain number, sometimes setting people free right after police brought them in. The system irked cops for years and Rowan said he understood the annoyance, having experienced it himself. He announced in March 2013 the end of the matrix and the start of 36-hour holds.

Rowan said Friday that he never ended the matrix completely, just that he "eliminated the previous jail cap of 135 inmates."

The sheriff's office on Nov. 18, 2015, published its first progress report. The 26-page digital document included a section that chronicled events in the agency under Rowan's leadership. An entry for April 2013 states:

"Policy Changes in Jail to keep more offenders behind bars. Matrix releases are reduced and jail population is increased. Every effort is made to hold new inmates for 36 hours, as allowed by law, while charges are pending."

The report's section on the jail gives this:

"In April 2013 a new policy was implemented aimed at keeping more

"The goal is to get as few (matrix releases) as possible and hold as many people as we can safely."

— Sheriff's Capt. Stewart Harp, jail commander

offenders behind bars. The 'catch-and-release' matrix was eliminated and the jail population was increased. New inmates are now held for at least 36 hours, as allowed by law, while charges are pending."

Sheriff's Capt. Stewart Harp is the jail commander. He said the jail could not entirely end the "forced release" matrix and in 2015 the jail had to set free 352 people at different times to control the population.

But that was just a fraction of the inmates it used to let go early.

Harp said the jail had about 2,000 such releases in 2012. And information from the corrections page on the county's website shows the jail freed an average of 1,757 people a year due to overcrowding from 2005 through 2010.

The 36-hour policy and increases in staffing caused the jail's population to grow, from around 140 inmates a day before Rowan was sheriff to 220 a day in July. Harp said that was like adding another jail in Eastern Oregon.

The jail lost some positions from 2008-2010, but county commissioners in recent years added two "civilian" control room operators and a sergeant, who this year bumped up to lieutenant. Harp said those positions allow corrections deputies to work the jail floor and control a larger number of inmates.

The jail is "never going to get rid" of all matrix releases, Harp said, "but the goal is to

get as few as possible and hold as many people as we can safely."

This year the jail is on track for 4,600 intakes, he said, and 350-500 matrix releases "is a pretty low percentage."

Yet during the past six months, the matrix was the No. 1 reason the jail released inmates that are under the jurisdiction of the Pendleton Municipal Court.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts provided copies of jail logs from March 19 to Aug. 20 that show the jail released 83 of 257 inmates for "matrix overcrowding." That was almost double the number of the city court inmates a judge out or who served their lawful time.

Some entries show the jail kicked out offenders the same day as their arrest.

Each morning, Roberts explained in an email, either the code enforcement officer or another officer calls to confirm if a defendant is in jail. The police department provides the information to the city court so the judge knows if someone is awaiting arraignment.

"Obviously, the attached documents refute the sheriff's assertion that he is holding offenders more accountable while cutting back on failure to appear numbers," Roberts stated.

The jail logs also show 29 inmates got out after hitting the 36-hour mark. Together with the matrix releases, 43.6 percent of Pendleton Municipal Court inmates in the period did not see a judge

before leaving the jail.

Rowan said that is because the Pendleton Municipal Court only operates three days a week, from Tuesday through Thursday. In Hermiston the court operates in-custody hearings Monday-Friday, which allows most inmates in their system to be arraigned within 36 hours, no matter when they are arrested.

But many who will appear in Pendleton Municipal Court have no opportunity to see a judge within 36 hours.

"We identify these low level individuals, and if the jail population becomes too high, we force release them knowing that it isn't possible for them to see a judge because there won't be court on Friday or Monday," Rowan said.

Lehnert said he would not make a campaign promise to keep a certain number of offenders behind bars if he wins the race.

"My intent would be to evaluate the staff to inmate ratio and ensure inmate and staff safety was the top priority," he said.

Lehnert also said he would rely on people with knowledge about what a reasonable inmate population is for the county jail, including Harp and other staff. They are doing the work each day, he said, and would have valuable input.

And an audit into what capacity the jail could operate with current staffing levels might be in order, he said.

Rowan said he has only received one complaint on his jail policy in the four years since he instituted it, and it comes now from a political rival in the middle of campaign season.

"It does make me wonder though," said Rowan. "Were they truly looking for a solution, or just playing politics?"

HUSTON: Detectives are looking into the background of the gun

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Huston from volunteering as a wrestling coach for Hermiston High School.

Huston submitted the volunteer application on Nov. 17, 2014, according to a copy of the document from the Hermiston School District. Huston gave his consent for a criminal history check and marked the box denoting he had a conviction of a crime involving violence or the threat of violence.

Hermiston School District, like others in Oregon, pay Criminal Information Services, Inc., to conduct background checks. The company claims to scour information from more than 1,100 police agencies, courts and other sources.

Tricia Mooney, assistant superintendent of human resources for the district, said she has seen CRIS find everything from tickets for driving without a seat belt to dismissed court charges. Huston's application went through that same process, she said, and the report noted the conviction.

Huston's application also contains a handwritten explanation of the arrest, though without a signature or initials. It states that Huston worked for Union Pacific and during a traffic stop a Stanfield police officer told him

having the gun was OK. But Huston did not know the railroad prohibited guns on its property.

"He used to be in the military so was accustomed to always carrying a firearm," read the statement on his volunteer application.

When conducting a background check, Mooney said the district first looks for any crimes involving a minor, a red flag that excludes an applicant. Other crimes, though, are not so black-and-white.

"The process we use involved a matrix, if you will," she said.

Someone with a drunk driving conviction from years ago, for example, could be OK as a volunteer now.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said detectives are looking into the background of the gun Huston used and asked the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives for a trace of its history.

"We have limited access to gun receipts, gun sales and things along those lines," he said.

He said he did not know when the feds might provide information.

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UTILITIES: Plan calls for \$3.5M in water projects on the east side of the airport

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hoped that increased accessibility would bring manufacturers and other industrial companies to the airport. The 40-acre plot the city bought in 2011 for future industrial development has mostly sat vacant, with little access to utilities until recently.

Spurred by a Vancouver, Washington company interested in building a data center in the area, the city built a \$300,000 sewer line extension to Stage Gulch Road, saving money by having city workers install the line themselves instead of hiring a contractor.

But the city's plan to connect the intersection to the rest of its utility system is much more ambitious than that.

The city's water master plan has Pendleton building an interim westward line extension, a pond and a pump station within the next five years at an estimated cost of \$2.8 million.

Public Works Director Bob Patterson said the water would mostly be needed for fire suppression

purposes, enough to supply a sustained rate of 2,000 gallons per minute for four hours.

The master plan also calls for \$3.5 million in water projects on the east side of the airport, to supply water to a planned industrial park for unmanned aerial system companies. And the plan pegs the cost of gravity mains, lift stations and force mains at \$7.3 million in the next five years, although Patterson said that figure would be lowered with the westward sewer line extension already completed.

To pay for the substantial cost of expanding its utility system at the airport and cover maintenance costs across Pendleton, the city wants to leverage recent water and sewer rate hikes to pay for a loan.

Patterson said he has already sent in an application for a sewer loan and is working on the application for a water loan that's due in September.

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WOOL: 'Europe, Asia would eat up Pendleton if they knew it was here'

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brand name Pendleton carries a strong association with the Eastern Oregon town.

"We're a heritage brand, but our roots are in Eastern Oregon," Christnacht said.

Pendleton, the city, and Travel Oregon have made a concerted effort to increase experiential tourism by marketing to international countries. At a Pendleton Convention Center commission meeting Aug. 18, convention center manager Steve Chrisman said experiential tourism is on the rise, and Pendleton is packed full of those experiences, including the Woolen Mills, Round-Up and hand-crafted leather stores.

"Europe, Asia would eat up Pendleton if they knew it was here," he said. "I think sometimes because we have such an amazing Round-Up,

we get over confident that the world knows we're here."

Travel Oregon and other industry leaders that Japanese tourists and consumers seek unique, handmade and quality goods, such as Pendleton wool. Pendleton isn't likely to see an immediate impact from the company's expansion into Japan, but the cultural crossover is a natural fit between the two places, he said.

"I don't know that suddenly 747s will be landing at the airport and we're going to have 10 tour buses a day," Beard said. "But ... Pendleton, Oregon is fortunate that in a community of 16,500 there are entities like Pendleton wool, the Pendleton Round-Up, Pendleton Whisky. So it gives us a much larger footprint than we really are."

Pendleton's expansion into Japanese department stores won't immediately affect manufacturing at the local 1307 S.E. Court Pl. Woolen Mill, according to Christnacht.

Pendleton Woolen Mill manager John Boston said because the local mill only manufactures the fabric that goes into making products, they often don't know where those fabrics ultimately end up.

Production for the 2017 line is still months away. However, Christnacht said plenty of fabric manufactured at the Pendleton and Washougal mills has found its way to Japan, not only from past Japan-specific clothing lines, but also projects including a collaborative effort with NikeiD's Pendleton shoe collection.

Pendleton also started a European expansion plan

five years ago that, according to Christnacht, the company made progress on but recent economic issues within the European Union have somewhat stagnated initiative. Pendleton has also tapped into the Canadian market with outdoor product lines and wool blankets.

But Japan remains Pendleton's most lucrative international market. Christnacht said while New York and Paris were once considered the fashion capitals of the world, Tokyo has established itself as a leader, too.

Pendleton's brand will soon reap the benefits of an underutilized Japanese market, while the Eastern Oregon town continues to expand its international tourism reach.

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Dr. Ward is originally from Boise, Idaho and graduated from Boise State. He attended medical school at Western University of Health Science in Pomona, California and completed his residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology in Muskegon, Michigan. He considers himself to have the best job in the world and finds joy in all aspects of obstetrics and gynecology and taking care of women of all backgrounds, ages, and sizes. He and his family, wife Robin, and their three children, are active in their church and look forward to being involved in the community.

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