

MILTON-FREEWATER

State considering tighter controls on local wells

Proposal includes 'Serious Water Management Problem Area'

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
East Oregonian

As groundwater levels continue to decline in the Walla Walla sub-basin, the Oregon Water Resources Department is considering tighter controls on deep wells near Milton-Freewater.

Specifically, regulators want to restrict future wells for drinking water only, and adopt what's known as a Serious Water Management Problem Area, or SWMPA, that

would require users to install flow meters and record monthly readings.

The agency outlined its proposal for the sub-basin during a pair of public meetings Oct. 24 and 25, which drew nearly 170 people. A local Rules Advisory Committee is expected to form and meet sometime before the end of the year to provide input on how the changes will affect the community.

According to state data, there are 239 total wells within the proposed SWMPA, which is located entirely

within the sub-basin south of the Oregon-Washington state line. Those wells pump 64,200 acre-feet of water annually, with more than 95 percent used for agriculture. Water levels are dropping in the basalt aquifers at a rate of 3-4 feet per year.

In order to curb those losses, the Water Resources Department is calling for a classification of waters within the sub-basin boundary that would only allow new wells for drinking water or other "exempt" uses, such as stock watering and

fire protection. The change would not affect existing water rights, but would in essence ban other large farms and vineyards from moving in and drilling for additional groundwater.

"Our charge is to protect senior (water) users," said Justin Iverson, groundwater section manager for the Water Resources Department. "This classification stops the problem from getting worse."

Under the SWMPA, users with existing basalt wells would be required to install flow meters allowing the department to check water levels at least once per year. A

public hearing will be required first, but the department hopes to have the new rules adopted by May 2017, and meters installed by 2018.

Iverson said the Rules Advisory Committee will be composed of 8-15 people from the community with different backgrounds, including city officials, farmers, tribes and the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council. They are expected to convene and meet for the first time later this fall.

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

PENDLETON

Municipal judge resigns, city seeks replacement

East Oregonian

The city of Pendleton is in the market for a municipal court judge.

At a city council meeting Tuesday, Mayor Phillip Houk announced that Municipal Court Judge Jeff Wallace will resign his position Jan. 1.

In his resignation letter to the mayor, Wallace wrote that although he continues to work in Pendleton at the Mautz & O'Hanlon law firm, he has recently moved to The Dalles.

Wallace has also recently

joined the public defender consortium for Union and Wallowa counties, meaning he no longer had the time or energy to continue carrying out his role as judge.

Houk said he already received interest in the job, and proposed they hold interviews at the Dec. 6 council meeting.

City attorney Nancy Kerns said the council has previously required the judge be an active member of the Oregon Bar Association and suggested the council open the application to retired lawyers as well.

A retired Umatilla County Circuit Court judge, Wallace was appointed municipal court judge in 2014. His most recent contract paid him \$27,900 per year.

In other council news, councilors agreed to provide a \$242,566 deposit for a new 12-inch water line and 8-inch sewer line as a part of the Eighth Street Bridge project.

According to a city staff report, the deposit only covers the estimated costs of the project and would be subject to change, based on bids and change orders.

The sewer line is being built

to provide wastewater service to Eighth Street residences north of Umatilla River and the water line is included to accommodate future growth.

The council also unanimously agreed to a memorandum of understanding with the Kiwanis Club of Pendleton to take over maintenance and liability responsibilities for the playground at Kiwanis Park.

Pendleton Parks and Recreation had closed the park over safety concerns, but the club's takeover could allow it to reopen faster.

PENDLETON

Police nab two for armed robbery

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Pendleton police late Tuesday caught two suspects following an armed robbery at a service station.

An employee at the Indian Hill Chevron, 309 S.E. Nye Ave., Pendleton, called 9-1-1 at 11:47 p.m., according to police activity information, and reported a suspect "pulled a black rifle on him" and robbed the place, then left on Southgate in a black SUV toward nearby Tutuilla Road.



Burgess

The Umatilla County District Attorney's Office in a written statement reported Pendleton officers arrived a minute later, got a description of the suspects and their direction of travel.

Soon after, Pendleton police and Oregon State Police troopers arrested Dennis Lee Burgess, 31, of Pendleton, and Peggy Turk, 31, no address available, at the Denny's parking lot, 610 Tutuilla Road. They face the following initial charges: first-degree robbery, first-degree conspiracy to commit robbery, unlawful possession of a firearm, unlawful use of a firearm and two counts of pointing firearm at another, plus one count each of second-degree theft, second-degree conspiracy to commit theft, and possession of methamphetamine.

Police recovered a gun, merchandise and cash consistent with what witnesses reported, according to the district attorney's office.

Burgess has criminal cases in Umatilla County going back to 2002, according to court records, and convictions for burglary and theft. Records show Turk lived in Adams and Pendleton and she has no convictions.

Police booked Burgess into the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, but did not put Turk in the jail. The robbery investigation is ongoing.

GOVERNOR: State hasn't elected Republican since 1982

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while the courts threw out most of the "grand bargain" from the 2013 Legislature to revise PERS, other parts remain viable.

On Oregon's high school graduate rate — which at 74 percent is the third-worst in the nation — Pierce said schools must have a low tolerance for absence and the state should encourage technical and labor tracks, not just a track to college. And immigration is a federal issue, he said, and the lack of reform is a "complete and federal failure." The solution is good law, he said, and as governor he would lean on Oregon's congressional delegation to that end.

While Oregon hasn't elected a Republican governor since 1982, Pierce mentioned recent polls show a tight race with Democrat Gov. Kate Brown. Survey USA conducted a poll Oct. 10-12 for KATU News had Brown leading Pierce 46 percent to 42 percent, with 8 percent undecided and 4 percent picking "other."

"In terms of the election, we're excited," Pierce said, but then cautioned the crowd not to put too much faith in polls.

Pierce left Pendleton on a tight schedule for stops in Burns and Klamath Falls.

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



Republican gubernatorial candidate Bud Pierce answers questions from a local business owner Wednesday morning at a restaurant in downtown Pendleton. Pierce afterward hit the road for meetings with supporters in Burns and Klamath Falls.

Staff photo by Phil Wright

BRIEFLY

Umatilla County above state rate in early ballot returns

With less than a week to go before Election Day, almost one-third of Umatilla County's eligible voters have already cast their ballot. As of 11 a.m. Wednesday, the Oregon Secretary of State Elections Division is reporting that 32.4 percent of Umatilla County's 38,657 eligible voters have submitted ballots, slightly above the state's 31.5 percent voting rate.

Turnout among Democratic and Republican voters has been similar so far, 39 percent to 41 percent, respectively, while unaffiliated voters are returning ballots at just 19 percent.

While Umatilla County's returns are slightly above the state rate, its numbers are dead last when compared to the rest of Eastern Oregon.

Neighboring Morrow County has a 37.4 percent return rate while Wheeler County leads the entire state with a 50.6 percent rate.

Ballot drop boxes will be open through 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 8 and are available at the Umatilla County Courthouse in Pendleton, Hermiston City Hall, Milton-Freewater City Hall, Nixyaawii Governance Center in Mission, Umatilla City Hall, Stanfield City Hall, Pilot Rock City Hall and Athena City Hall.

Two teachers named civic scholars

PENDLETON — The Pendleton School District announced Wednesday that McKay Creek Elementary School teachers Linzie Noble and Cindy Schimel have been named 2016-2017 civic scholars.

The title brings free admission and travel assistance to the Civics Conference for Teachers in Salem Dec. 2, a conference that will feature workshops led by master teachers and representativeness of each branch of Oregon government.

Each Oregon legislator nominates two teachers in their district to attend the conference, and state Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, tapped Noble, a fifth grade teacher, and Schimel, who teaches third grade.

"When you work with kids you have the ability to help them see their potential and their capabilities for success in the future," Noble said. "I'm looking forward to attending the conference and learning how my students can benefit from what I learn."



Noble



Schimel

BUS: Will start routes Jan 2.

Continued from 1A

the first adjustments they made was to remove the stop at Southeast 10th Street and Highland Avenue, which adjacent property owners pointed out was on a narrow county road surrounded mostly by pasture.

"I don't see anybody really using it," neighbor Dennis Barnett said.

J.D. Tovey, CTUIR planning director, said that the stop was placed there to fill in a long gap between two other stops in an attempt to place most Hermiston residents within a quarter mile walk of a bus stop. But he agreed that the location was "probably the least-performing" of the proposed stops and the committee decided to remove it.

After some discussion, the committee next moved a stop from Southeast 10th Street and Main Street over to the intersection of Ridgeway Avenue and Main Street, and added a stop at Highland Park to better serve the Highland Summit area.

"It services a huge area there and adds value to our park," city councilor Doug Primmer said.

Many of the stops that were moved on Tuesday were shifted to an area that committee members felt was safer and less disruptive to traffic. The Kayak bus will have flashing lights that drivers are legally required to stop behind, just like a school bus. But Tovey said Kayak drivers have found on their intra-city route that people frequently ignore the lights.

Keeping that in mind, the committee moved a stop next to Hermiston High School at Highland Avenue and First Place into the parking lot at Hodge Park. Mark Morgan, assistant city manager, pointed out that the change also meant riders waiting at the stop could use the garbage cans and restrooms at the park. For similar reasons, a stop at the corner of Northwest Seventh Street and Elm Avenue was moved down Elm Avenue into the parking lot next to the Hermiston Butte.

The group also decided to combine two stops at Southeast Fourth Street and Highland and Southeast Seventh Street and Highland into one at Southeast Fifth Street and Highland because there was a better place for the bus to pull off. Other stops were shifted just slightly from where the

city placed fake "bus stops" earlier in the week so as to avoid placing a bus stop at someone's front yard.

Tovey said the tribes could make adjustments to the stops on a quarterly basis as riders gave feedback. The committee agreed that stops along Northwest 11th Street, for example, would probably be shifted once traffic signals and crosswalks were installed at the street's intersections with Orchard Avenue and Elm Avenue next summer (the committee did add a stop at 11th and Juanita on Tuesday). They could also examine ridership patterns, he said, and note which stops the driver rarely stopped at because no one was there waiting as they drove past.

After finalizing a route to send to the city council, the committee also discussed a budget for the system, which starting Jan. 2 will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Morgan said it was hard to predict ridership for both the bus system and the city's current taxi ticket program for senior and disabled riders. But projections he shared Tuesday for the 2017-2018 fiscal year predicted 12,000 riders per year for the bus and 12,000 riders per year on the taxi program.

Under those circumstances the transportation program could expect to bring in \$189,000 in revenue from taxi tickets and state and county grants for the bus system.

The taxi program would cost \$79,200 and the bus system would cost \$250,000 for a total of \$329,200. That would mean the city would need to budget about \$140,000 per year from the general fund for transportation.

"We've been shooting for \$150,000 for a subsidy," Morgan said. "If these numbers hold out, we would have almost \$10,000 extra."

The advisory committee also discussed names for the bus system, noting that only 47 people had voted on the online survey so far. They agreed that the city council could hold off on a name until its Nov. 28 meeting, keeping the survey at www.hermiston.or.us open until then.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THURSDAY, NOV. 3
BOARDMAN KIWANIS, 6:45 a.m., Riverfront Lodge, 6 E. Marine Drive.
TUMBLEWEED TOASTMASTERS, 6:45 a.m., Eastern Oregon Higher Education Center room 134, 975 S.E. Columbia Dr., Hermiston. Visitors welcome. (541-567-3360).
PENDLETON DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION, 7 a.m., Pendleton City Hall community room, 501 S.W. Emigrant Ave.
PENDLETON LIONS CLUB, 7 a.m., Roosters Restaurant, 1515 Southgate, Pendleton.
ARTS AND CRAFTS FROM THE DRY SIDE, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., basement of Assembly of God Church, 730 East Hurlburt Ave., Hermiston. Use the Seventh Street entrance. Monthly business meeting at noon. (541-567-4446).
UMATILLA DOG WALKING CLUB, 10 a.m., 630 Switzer St. at the dog wash in front of Umatilla High School.
ALTRUSA INTERNATIONAL OF HERMISTON, 12 noon, ARC of Umatilla County, 215 W. Orchard Ave.
HERMISTON LINEBACKER CLUB, 12 noon to 1 p.m., Desert Lanes, 1545 N. First St., Hermiston. Hear HHS football coach David Faateete discuss last week's game and talk about the upcoming tilt. RSVP by Wednesday at 3 p.m. to 541-567-5215. Cost is \$11 for members, \$13 for non-members.
HERMISTON ROTARY CLUB,

12 noon, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church Parish Hall, Fifth Street and Locust Avenue.
PENDLETON KIWANIS CLUB, 12 noon, Roosters Restaurant, 1515 Southgate, Pendleton. Guests welcome. ((541-278-5785).
PENDLETON LINEBACKER'S CLUB, 12 noon, Pendleton Elks Lodge; 14 S.E. Third St.; fee for lunch.
PAULINE REBEKAH LODGE NO. 13, 2 p.m., IOOF Hall, 19 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton. (Gladys 541-276-4417 or Marguerite 541-276-2853).
HERMISTON HORSESHOE CLUB, 5 p.m., Weber Field, 600 S. First St., Hermiston. (Rick Rebman 541-720-6402).
PENDLETON ROUND-UP LIONS CLUB, 5:30-7 p.m., St. Anthony Hospital, 2801 St. Anthony Way, Pendleton.
ARC UMATILLA COUNTY BINGO, 6 p.m., doors open, bingo starts at 7 p.m., 215 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston. (541-567-7615).
KIWANIS OF ECHO, 6-7:30 p.m., Echo Masonic Hall, 200 S. duPont St., Echo. Guests welcome. (chokiwani@centurytel.net, 541-379-6992).
MOTHERS OF PRESCHOOLERS (MOPS), 6-7:30 p.m., Seventh-day Adventist Church, lower level, 1401 S.W. Goodwin Place, Pendleton. (www.mopspendleton.blogspot.com or mopspendleton@gmail.com).
PENDLETON EAGLES BURGERS AND KARAOKE, 6 p.m., Pendleton Eagles Lodge #28, 428 S. Main St.,

Pendleton. (541-278-2828).
PENDLETON ELKS LODGE NO. 288, 6 p.m. dinner, 7:30 p.m. lodge meeting, 14 S.E. 3rd St.
TOPS, 6 p.m. weigh-in; 7 p.m. meeting, Peace Lutheran Church, 210 N.W. Ninth St., Pendleton. (Heather Endersby 541-969-6997).
INLAND NORTHWEST ORCHESTRA, 6:30 p.m., Harris Jr. Academy, 3121 S.W. Hailey Ave., Pendleton. (RaNeil Dunn 541-289-4696).
PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), 6:30 p.m., 1535 N.E. Gladys Drive, Hermiston. (541-571-1965).
AAUW, 7 p.m., Vert Club Room, 345 S.W. Fourth St., Pendleton. Melissa Woodbury will present a slide show from her trip to Iceland. Everyone welcome. (karenallen1965@gmail.com)
ATHENA-WESTON LIONS CLUB, 7 p.m., Weston Memorial Hall, 210 E. Main St. (Betty Jane 541-566-3902).
GEORGE ST. DENIS POST NO. 140 AMERICAN LEGION, 7 p.m., Legion Hall, Mission.
HERMISTON ELKS, 7 p.m., 480 E. Main St.
PENDLETON MASONIC LODGE NO. 52, 7 p.m., 1350 N.W. Carden Ave.
UMATILLA SAGE RIDERS, 7 p.m., 81907 N. Highway 295, Hermiston. (541-561-0695).
V.F.W. HERMISTON POST NO. 4750, 7 p.m., 1888 W. Cherry St., Hermiston.