

ODFW: \$46.7M of the \$86M target would go to conservation

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the roughly \$86 million ask every biennium will be politically challenging.

The state faces a \$1.7 billion shortfall going into the next biennium, according to the Governor's Office.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown is expected to release her balanced budget Thursday.

The tax force's recommendations will come in a legislative session that will likely be characterized by attempts to both cut costs and raise funds across the board.

Much of the discussion at Monday's meeting revolved around gaining traction for the additional ask — both in terms of support from members of the legislature and from the state's hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation and conservation communities.

Many at Monday's meeting pointed to the success of Measure 99 — which passed at the ballot box earlier this month to allocate state lottery funding for outdoor education — as an example of an initiative that leveraged the support of those Oregonians who value outdoor recreation such as cycling or hiking, but don't hunt or fish.

Oregon State Rep. Ken Helm, a nonvoting member of the task force, advised the task force to meet with all members of the Legislature and to gain the support not only of conservation groups, but also of Oregon businesses.

Task force members also met with Rep. Phil Barnhart, D-Eugene, and Rep. Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, last week.

Barnhart is chairman of the House Interim Revenue Committee, while Witt is chairman of the House Interim Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

According to task force members, Barnhart and Witt discouraged them from emphasizing either tax and instead were advised to "lead with" the mission of ODFW and what it plans to do with the additional money.

That money, according to task force recommendations, is to be allocated toward additional conservation activities, improved hunting and fishing opportunities, increasing outreach and education efforts, and the cost of needed maintenance to department infrastructure that has been put off in prior budget years.

The largest chunk of the approximately \$86 million target — about \$46.7 million — would be dedicated to conservation efforts.

Stakeholders and legislators also appear to want to see more oversight for the department's ongoing work — another bill passed last year is intended to track in the coming years how many hours ODFW workers spend doing work on behalf of other departments.

A final report of the task force's recommendations is expected to be complete by the year's end.

Trek to Castro's final resting spot traces revolution's past

By CHRISTINE ARMARIO
Associated Press

HAVANA — After his band of bearded rebels won power in 1959, Fidel Castro embarked on a victory tour delivering speeches to cheering crowds stretching from the eastern Cuban city of Santiago to Havana. Starting Wednesday, his ashes will retrace that journey in a solemn procession to his final resting spot.

The trip is fraught with symbolism as the island nation prepares to bury the only leader it has known in 57 years besides his younger brother, Raul Castro.

The six-day Caravan of Freedom that Fidel Castro led in 1959 was among his most triumphant moments. As Castro's remains are prepared for the return to Santiago, the state is rekindling images of a younger Castro whose legacy they vow to keep alive.

"Fidel will always be that restless youth and tireless revolutionary, who attacked the Moncada, arrived aboard the Granma yacht to forge the path to freedom, fought like a lion in the Sierra Maestra and crossed the country in the Caravan of Victory," proclaimed an article in

Granma, the official Communist Party newspaper, a day after Castro's death.

The caravan carrying Castro's ashes will pass through a countryside dramatically different from the one he rode through more than five decades ago.

"It's a kind of symbolic closure to his rule," said William LeoGrande, an American University professor of Latin American politics. "The Castro era began with the triumph of the revolution and Fidel's march across the country. Now he's gone and they retrace that route, and the Cubans of this era have a

chance to say goodbye."

Castro's victory march snaked from Santiago, where the revolution was launched, through rural towns and cities. For many Cubans, it was their first chance to get a glimpse of the man clad in olive green who seized power from dictator Fulgencio Batista's corrupt government. In cities such as Jiguani and Santa Rita, people lined the streets to greet the rebels passing by in jeeps.

Grainy black-and-white images of Castro waving to the crowds are some of the most enduring images of the revolution.

SCHOOL: District has added 14 modular classrooms since 2008

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ities in addition to providing more capacity.

Including those new facilities and updates at Sandstone Middle School, the school board thought it was best to pursue a \$104 million bond in May.

Maiocco said the district's facilities have needs outside the scope of the bond, but the district wanted to keep the tax rate from school bonds under \$5 per \$1,000 in assessed value.

The bond proposal certainly cuts it close, adding 90 cents to the current \$4.09 per \$1,000 tax rate.

The district will also try to offset some of the cost by applying for a grant through the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program, a state initiative that provides matching funds for districts that pass bonds.

Districts in Milton-Freewater, Athena-Weston, Echo and Umatilla have all used it to their advantage, and Maiocco estimates Hermiston could get \$4 million from the grant program if their application is approved.

The deadline for the grant application means the board needs to commit the bond proposal by Dec. 12.

If the bond gets the green light, school board member Ginny Holthus said the board would help form a political action committee



EO file photo
Hermiston High School students and teachers enter the HHS building Monday on the first day of school in 2014. The school district is considering a school bond that would add on to the current high school.

"We will be back. We will not solve all of it."

— Fred Maiocco,

HSD superintendent, when asked if district would pursue another bond in 10 years

to campaign for the bond starting in January.

With the last public opinion survey showing 48 percent of voters opposed to the bond versus 46 for it, Maiocco said the district would see clear, negative effects from not being able to build new facilities while enrollment continues to rise.

The district has added 14 modular classrooms to its schools since 2008. And if Hermiston continued to meet or exceed the Portland

State enrollment projection, it would need to add another 22 units, bringing the total number of modulars to 56.

Maiocco said the district has already switched from buying modulars to leasing them to save money. And if the district wasn't able to continue building them, it might have to consider switching to a year-round or double shift school schedule.

Given the relative frequency in which the district has asked for bonds from the public, an audience member asked Maiocco if the district would pursue another bond in 10 years.

"We will be back," Maiocco responded. "We will not solve all of it."

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COUNCIL: HART chosen as name for free public bus system

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the Port of Umatilla for the adjacent property in 2015. The council approved the resolution unanimously.

The council also approved a name for the free public bus system that will go into effect in Hermiston starting Jan. 2. The system will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday via a contract with Kayak Public Transit.

An online survey by the city saw the HART (Hermiston Area Regional Transit) receive 51 percent of the votes, beating out the Watermelon Express, Bulldog Express and Hermiston Looper. The council unanimously voted to adopt the HART name.

"I heart it," councilor Doug Primmer said, setting off a round of heart and bus-related puns by council members.

On Monday the council also approved a request from the Hermiston School District to waive utility fees on the Umatilla County Fairgrounds from Dec. 31, 2016 to May 31, 2017.

The district will take over the fairgrounds on Jan. 1 but has agreed to hold off on demolition until the high school and college rodeos and horse sales are complete for the year. The new rodeo arena at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center will not be finished in time.

Smith said waiving water, sewer and electric bills for five months will cost the city less than \$2,000. Councilors unanimously agreed to do so, noting the school district had been a "very patient" partner and the events would bring in much more than \$2,000 of economic benefit to the community.

"Obviously we want these events to have a home," mayor David Drotzmann said. "We don't want them to find a new home. If they find a new home they won't come back."

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