

POT: State will collect sales tax

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to background checks rather than list all the crimes that would signal red flags.

"I think it needs to be short and require the application of a little subjectivity," she said.

Erin Purchase, Krenzler's significant other, added the city should only conduct background checks of the business owners and not every employee, which the provision calls for. Employees come and go, she said, and the constant checks would burden the city and businesses.

"That seems like a waste of resources," she said.

Chalmers also challenged the notion of so many background checks

"I don't think it's the city's responsibility to validate employees," he said. "I think we're dabbling in an area that I don't think we need to be dabbling in."

Councilor Chuck Wood said he was on board with the checks, which Pendleton police chief Stuart Roberts considers a good idea.

"These guys are going to pay \$4,600 for a license to the state and another \$1,500 to us," Wood said. "... I think they're going to want to do it right."

Young said marijuana remains illegal under federal

law, so he would vote no.

"You have not given me a new oath that Oregon trumps federal law," he said.

Some councilors emphasized reviewing the law in a year, and Wood encouraged the council to look at the state's system of fees to fit different types and sizes of businesses.

And the council also voted 8-0 for the agreement to allow the state revenue department to collect marijuana sales tax.

The state will collect its own taxes and the city's, Kerns said, and charge 4 percent of the city's 3 percent local tax.

"We're going to make a lot of money on this deal," councilor Becky Marks quipped.

Young, though, said he had no problem passing this because "the state is the one getting its hands dirty."

Kerns after the meeting said while the city now can accommodate a marijuana business, operators first need a license from the state and a conditional use permit from the city planning commission. The city has a couple of those applications in the hopper, she said.

Mayor Phillip Houk after the meeting said while he disagreed with using marijuana, the citizens spoke and

the council listened.

"We're trying to put together the process so it works, and works in a safe manner," Houk said.

The council unanimously voted for changes to the city's nuisance law. The city no longer has to use certified mail to send nuisance notices to property owners. And the penalty for a chronic nuisance property jumped from \$100 per day to \$500.

Kerns said she has worked for the city for 10 years and is not aware of the city using the law. She said she tried once and traded the fine for a conviction in circuit court.

The meeting was the last for out-going councilors Wood and Young and for most purposes for Houk, who served on the council for 23 years. While he will have to open the council's first meeting of 2017, he then turns over the gavel to Mayor-elect John Turner.

He expressed confidence in the council, gave one more plug for Pendleton as a great city to live in, and turned to look at his wife, Kathy Houk, sitting in the small audience. The mayor choked up and said she was by him through his whole political career.

SANTA: Students in the program range from kindergarten to fifth grade

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season is really about.

"Christmas isn't about toys," he said. "It's about loving and helping other people."

The students in the program range from kindergarten to fifth grade. The district decided last year to move students from Highland Hills Elementary School to West Park.

Jeana Beck of the Hermiston Board of Realtors said she started collecting money for the gifts when the two classes were unexpectedly moved, and the students were having a hard time with the transition. One of their teachers, Suzanne Beck, began looking for a way to make the move easier and surprise the students for Christmas.

"Suzanne didn't have funding, so she asked me for help. I said 'yes,' and started asking around the Board of Realtors," said Jeana, who is Suzanne's sister-in-law



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Fourth-grader Kein Mathis fist bumps Santa Claus, Richard Scarlett, at West Park Elementary School on Tuesday in Hermiston.

and has an autistic son. "I had \$700 within 48 hours."

Suzanne said she had her students write letters asking for certain gifts, and the teachers put together a small catalog from which students could pick out things they wanted.

"We're working on the transition (between schools), this is just a little bump up for them," she

said. Scarlett and Hunt — who met at West Park Elementary in the first grade — have been dressing up as Santa and Mrs. Claus and making visits to local schools, hospitals and retirement homes for 12 years.

"We did 15 different places this year," Scarlett said. "It's just so much fun."

CART: Wal-Mart manager said she would bring in more if the need increased

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the last five as manager of the Pendleton store. She took information from Bissinger and called the "home office" about the carts. Sure enough, the retail giant had them, and she ordered two.

Nulf said she was concerned they would not arrive until after the holiday shopping season. The carts came Tuesday.

"I rushed them up front," she said.

And Bissinger and Ember went shopping at noon.

Nulf said the corporate motto is "Happy to help," and the new carts meet a need in the store. Bissinger said she knows several families in Pendleton and Umatilla County could use these carts. Nulf added she would bring in more if the need increased.

She said seeing Ember in the cart was good.

Ember's needs stem from congenital cytomegalovirus, or CMV.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CMV is a common virus affecting people of all ages. Once you have CMV, you always have CMV, and more than half the population over 40 has the virus.

Most people with CMV show no signs or symptoms, but the virus can cause serious health problems for people with weakened immune systems and for developing babies in the womb.

"I got a cold in the first couple of months of pregnancy," Bissinger said. "It turns out it was way more than that."

Bissinger said her daughter obviously suffered from something, and local doctors did not know what. Six months after Ember was born, Bissinger said, a doctor in Portland made the diagnosis.

Congenital CMV infection can cause a range of symptoms, including some worse than Ember's. Bissinger said her daughter can express herself, enjoys the stimulation of being in public and, like any young child, can get into any mess she finds.

"I consider myself lucky that she can interact and have the ability to be a wild child," she said.

She also said she hoped people would respect the new carts. Life is difficult enough, she said, and even small comforts help.

VW deal gives diesel owners buyback option

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Volkswagen reached a deal that will give at least some owners of the remaining 80,000 diesel vehicles caught in the company's emissions cheating scandal the option of a buyback and provide compensation to all of them on top of any repurchase or repairs, U.S. regulators and a federal judge said Tuesday.

The \$1 billion settlement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will give owners of 20,000 3-liter diesel cars the choice of a buyback. The figure does not include additional payments to owners.

Volkswagen believes it can bring the other 60,000 vehicles into compliance with pollution regulations and will not offer a buyback

if that's the case, U.S. District Judge Charles Breyer said in San Francisco.

The deal includes \$225 million the German automaker will contribute to an environmental fund to offset the cars' excess pollution, Cynthia Giles of the EPA said in a conference call with reporters.

Additional compensation for car owners will be substantial, according to the judge, but he did not provide a figure and said the sides still had more work to do.

"I am optimistic the parties will resolve the remaining issues," Breyer said, without elaborating on what was left to be done.

The settlement was a major step toward rectifying lawsuits stemming from

the global scandal that erupted last year, damaging Volkswagen's reputation and hurting its sales. The company previously reached a nearly \$15 billion deal for 475,000 2-liter diesel cars also programmed to cheat on emissions tests.

Hinrich J. Woebben, president and CEO of Volkswagen Group of America Inc., said the agreement announced Tuesday was part of Volkswagen's "efforts to make things right" for its customers.

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