

Pair in jail after ramming police car, fleeing

East Oregonian

A Walla Walla officer fired at suspects ramming a pickup into his patrol car on Sunday.

The Walla Walla Police Department in a written statement reported officer Paul Green was not injured, nor did his gunshots hit suspects Jason Gene Nathaniel Barnes, 32, of Walla Walla, and Jessica Dawn Grigsby, 35, of Hermiston.

Green at about 9:30 Sunday night saw a Chevrolet pickup with no lights pulling a utility trailer on West Sumach Street between Fourth and Fifth avenues near downtown Walla Walla. Green drove east on Sumach from Fifth, according to the statement, and saw the vehicle drive toward him from the intersection of Fourth Avenue.

The pickup drew closer, according to the statement, and the suspect accelerated and rammed into the front of the police car, forcing it back and off to the side of the road.

Green drew his gun, Walla Walla police reported, and fired at the pickup while it was ramming his car.

The driver fled south in

the vehicle on Fifth and other city streets before leaving the city southbound on Third Avenue. The chase continued into Oregon. Members of the Washington State Patrol, the sheriff's offices of Walla Walla and Umatilla counties and Milton-Freewater police joined the pursuit, which ended at 9:41 p.m. when the pickup crashed into a ditch after leaving railroad tracks in the area of Elliot and Birch Creek roads, a couple miles east of Milton-Freewater.

Barnes was the driver, according to Walla Walla police. Officers caught him as he tried to run. Grigsby was the passenger and did not try to escape.

The pair complained of minor injuries from the crash, according to the statement, and the pickup they were in was reported stolen. They also had multiple warrants for their arrests and had been arrested near Milton-Freewater in October for possession of methamphetamine. Both are in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton.

Walla Walla police also stated criminal charges are pending as detectives continue their investigation.

Snowy winter weather good news for increased summer water supply

Umatilla Basin currently at 129 percent snowpack

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

Water supplies for farms and fish could be well above average across the Umatilla, Walla Walla and Willow Creek basins this summer if winter continues its cold and snowy ways.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service published its Oregon Basin Outlook Report for Jan. 1, and signs point to a strong water year ahead — assuming Mother Nature cooperates.

The NRCS publishes six monthly Oregon Water Supply Outlook Reports between Jan. 1 and June 1 every year. The program measures snow and provides streamflow forecasts and snowpack data for communities and water managers across the West. In Oregon, snow measurements are collected from 81 different sites.

Local snowpack is currently 129 percent of normal, and overall precipitation is 124 percent of normal, thanks in part to an especially wet October that registered twice the usual amount of rainfall.

Streamflow forecasts for April through September range from 112 to 131 percent of average, but that will ultimately depend on what happens over the next three months.

“There is a lot of uncertainty in these first forecasts of the year,” according to the NRCS report. “If the rest of winter continues the wet, cold and snowy trend and spring snowmelt rate and timing are normal, then water supplies during the critical spring and summer months will likely be adequate.”

Scott Oviatt, NRCS snow survey

supervisory hydrologist, said snowpack is off to a strong start statewide, averaging of 124 percent of normal.

“The fall and early winter precipitation have provided relief to many areas that were moisture-depleted following a hot, dry August,” Oviatt said. “If the cool and wet pattern continues through the winter and spring months, then snowpack accumulation will continue to be normal or above normal, and spring snowmelt will occur slowly over an extended period.”

That's not what happened a year ago. Last January also saw above-average snowpack, only to be followed by record-breaking high temperatures in April that doubled the rate of snowmelt in some locations. Once the snow disappeared, streams dried up early and left some irrigators without their full allotment of water.

The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center is calling for above-average precipitation over the next three months in Oregon, and an equal chance of cold, warm or average temperatures. It remains to be seen whether snowpack will hold up, providing that natural reservoir of water for streams and rivers.

Umatilla County reservoirs remain well below normal after years of drought and below-average streamflow. As of Jan. 1, McKay Reservoir was 59 percent full and 49 percent full at Cold Springs Reservoir outside Hermiston.

Most of Eastern Oregon remains abnormally dry or in moderate drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, though the Climate Prediction Center says it is likely the

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— Scott Oviatt, NRCS snow survey supervisory hydrologist

designation will be removed for much of the area by March 31.

Forecasts are also calling for near-average streamflows in the Grande Ronde, Powder, Burnt and Imnaha basins, where snowpack is roughly 108 percent of normal. Reservoir levels are widely varied, from just 14 percent of normal at Phillips Lake near Baker City to 162 percent of normal at Wallowa Lake.

“As always, there's quite a bit of spatial variability in mountain snowpack, which can be explained by the variability within storm patterns,” the NRCS states. “A few locations, mostly in southern Oregon and in the Wallowa Mountains, are currently storing below normal amounts of snow.”

Snowpack is 127 percent of normal in the John Day Basin, and streamflow forecasts ranging from 109 to 114 percent of normal. Like neighboring basins, water supplies stand to be near or above average, assuming conditions hold.

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

BRIEFLY

Weather cancels several meetings

Several area organizations are canceling or rescheduling upcoming meetings due to inclement weather. Among the cancellations are:

- Round Up Republican Women. The group will meet Thursday, Feb. 9 at 11:45 a.m. at the Pendleton Red Lion. Mayor John Turner will provide his outlook and vision for the city of Pendleton and new business development. For more information, contact rounduprepublicanwomen@hushmail.com or 541-276-1206.

- The SAIF Corporation has postponed a pair of agriculture safety seminars scheduled for Jan. 10-11 in Hermiston. The free seminars are rescheduled for March 6 (in English) and March 7 (in Spanish) at the Hermiston Conference Center. Anyone working in the agricultural industry or interested in ag safety and health is welcome to attend. For more information or to register, call 800-285-8525 or visit www.SAIF.com/agseminar.

- The Hermiston School board canceled its Monday meeting. They will recognize educators of the year during a work session Monday, Jan. 23 at 5:30 p.m. at the district office, 305 S.W. 11th St. For more information, contact Maria Duron at 541-667-6036 or maria.duron@hermiston.k12.or.us.

- The Jan 11 meeting of Safe Communities meeting is rescheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 8.

The group focuses on many areas, including domestic violence, child abuse, teen violence, bullying, homelessness and safety regarding guns,

fire, cyber use, traffic and water. It meets the second Wednesday of each month at noon at Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston.

For more information, contact Juli Gregory at 541-667-3506 or jgregory@gshealth.org.

Fire chief to speak to retired educators

PENDLETON — Pendleton Fire chief Mike Ciraulo will share about current issues regarding firefighting and the Pendleton Fire Department during the January meeting of the Retired Educators of Umatilla County.

The no-host gathering is Thursday at 11:30 a.m. at Abby's Pizza, 828 Southgate, Pendleton. Membership in OREA-Unit 9 is not limited to retired educators. Anyone interested in education is invited to attend.

For more information, call Bill Mayclin at 541-276-4540.

Heppner gets set for St. Patrick's celebration

HEPPNER — Even with all the white stuff on the ground, those organizing the Wee Bit O' Ireland celebration are seeing green.

The first planning meeting is Thursday at 6 p.m. at Heppner City Hall, 111 N. Main St. Pizza and beverages will be provided. The festival is March 16-19 in Heppner.

For more information, contact Bates at 541-676-5536 or heppnerchamber@centurytel.net.

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

PENDLETON

Plass sues hospital for wrongful death of husband

East Oregonian

Susan Plass of Pendleton is suing St. Anthony Hospital for almost \$1.6 million over the death of her husband Jack Sanders in early 2016.

Attorney Marc Hull of Portland filed the lawsuit for Plass on Jan. 3 in Umatilla County Circuit Court, Pendleton.

Sanders fell and broke his right hip the night of Nov. 11, 2015, according to the complaint. Replacement

surgery the next day at St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, was a success, but afterward Sanders became confused, agitated and tried to get out of bed.

The confused state continued Nov. 13 when he fell and broke his left hip and suffered a subdural hematoma, a serious head injury. The complaint states an air ambulance flew Sanders to Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland, Washington, and Nov. 15 he

underwent surgery to replace the left hip. Sanders' health initially improved, then declined. He died Jan. 21 at a skilled nursing facility in northern Idaho.

“The underlying cause of death,” the complaint states, “was noted on his death certificate as the accumulated complications stemming from the subdural hematoma he suffered at St. Anthony.”

Plass serves on the board of education for Blue

Mountain Community College, Pendleton and is a retired University of Oregon administrator, where Sanders was a professor. She seeks \$1,598,230 from St. Anthony, including \$635,000 for medical treatment and \$250,000 each for Sanders' pain and suffering and her own.

Plass declined to comment for this report. St. Anthony spokesperson Larry Blanc said the hospital had no comment.

PENDLETON

Vert Auditorium marketing project put on hold

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

2016 was another quiet year for Pendleton's Vert Auditorium, but that wasn't the outlook at the beginning of the year.

City staff wanted to pay a consultant \$12,000 to bring six new shows to the Vert, even convincing the Pendleton City Council to appropriate \$6,000 from the art fund to help promote the city's historic theater.

The money was supposed to go toward the services of Michelle Liberty, a consultant with marketing the Gesa Powerhouse Theater in Walla Walla, but Liberty said she never heard back from the city after staff showed initial interest.

Liberty said money never changed hands and assumed the budget never came together for the project.

City manager Robb Corbett said the reason the plan never went forward had less to do with budgetary constraints and more to do with some key turnover.

One of the main staff members behind the project was former Pendleton Convention Center director Pat Kennedy, who left the position midway through 2016.

Corbett replaced Kennedy with Steve Chrisman, the city's economic development director and airport manager.

Because of Chrisman's expanded responsibilities and the newness of the

position — Chrisman now oversees three departments — Corbett said he decided against continuing to immediately pursue the Vert project.

Although the plan is currently on hiatus, Corbett said the Vert is an underutilized asset that deserves additional marketing.

Besides Oregon East Symphony concerts, Pendleton School District performances and the occasional private event, the auditorium sits empty most days.

Corbett said bringing more events to the Vert would take a concerted effort from multiple city depart-

ments, including facilities, parks and recreation and the convention center.

With the Vert having built a \$1.6 million backlog in maintenance needs and only garnering a minimal maintenance budget, Corbett said he didn't know whether the auditorium would need further investment to handle a larger slate of performances.

For her part, Liberty said the Vert remains a good venue and contains potential.

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

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Call 541-567-2185 or 541-667-3509 to register

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FREE class using the Bal-A-Vis-X approach to safely improve balance, movement, and strengthen body control. Great for all ages and fitness levels!
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GSMC Wellness Center (behind the hospital)
Call Kelly Thomas, 541-667-3400 x3050

Information or to register call (541) 667-3509 or email healthinfo@gshealth.org www.gshealth.org

GOOD SHEPHERD

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