

STANDOFF: Used explosives to blow door open

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warning the onlookers they were in danger.

Police in an armored vehicle rolled to the hotel's north side just before 8 p.m.

"The ultimate goal of having Abernathy come out of his motel room peacefully ended at 8:06 p.m. when negotiators heard what sounded like a muffled report from a firearm," Roberts reported.

Police at least twice used a megaphone to try to communicate with Abernathy, but the attempt went unanswered. Moments later an explosion emanated from the back of the hotel.

Roberts reported the explosion was police breaching the locked hotel room, blowing it off its hinges. Officers entered and found Abernathy dead.

Detectives from Pendleton and state police in cooperation with the Oregon Medical Examiner's Office and Mason County Sheriff's Office processed the motel room.

According to *The Olympian*, Abernathy was suspected in the deaths of Tara M. Abernathy and Kenneth E. Koonrad, who were found dead Tuesday. Both appeared to have died gunshot wounds, according to the paper.



Staff photos by E.J. Harris

ABOVE: State police armored vehicles stage on the back side of the Motel 6 after police stormed the room of an alleged homicide suspect Wednesday in Pendleton.



LEFT: Police officers in tactical gear stage on a balcony of the Motel 6 during a standoff with a man wanted in connection with a double homicide out of Shelton, Wash., on Wednesday in Pendleton.

CATTLE: Processed 185 cows, death toll at 17

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for tagging and immunizations. A local veterinarian was also on hand to assess each animal's body condition.

By day's end, Rowan said they processed 185 cattle with another eight still to go. The death toll, which had been 14 animals, is now 17, including a two-year-old heifer found dead early Wednesday morning. A necropsy determined the heifer, which was seven and a half months pregnant, had suffered from a bacterial disease and congestive heart failure.

"She had a rough life," said Brent Barton, veterinarian with the Oregon Trail Veterinary Clinic in Hermiston.

Upon investigation, Rowan said it appears the cattle were neglected over an extended period of time. There was no hay when officers first showed up weeks earlier, and water troughs had frozen over with 6-8 inches of ice.

"We have some really malnourished animals we've been contending with," Rowan said.

Rowan said they expect to file multiple charges of first- and second-degree animal neglect against Hockensmith in the coming days. Jake Kamins, Oregon's deputy district attorney dedicated solely to animal cases, has been brought on as a special prosecutor.

Hockensmith has not returned multiple calls by the *East Oregonian* for comment.

The sheriff's office has already spent several thousand dollars caring for the cattle, Rowan said. It also takes time and manpower to make sure the animals are properly fed, and to break through ice in the water troughs.

"It always stretches your resources," Rowan said. "At the same time, it's worthwhile. You hate to see the animals neglected."

Their goal Wednesday was to tag each of the cattle and give them much-needed vaccines, such as de-wormer and multi-mineral injection to boost their immune system. To do that, students from Matt Liscom's beef production class at BMCC joined the team to round up reluctant cattle and run them through the loading chutes.

From there, the animals were ushered one by one into a metal squeeze chute designed to hold them still, where Barton could perform his assessment. Some cattle thrashed, struggled and even fell down inside the contraption, getting themselves stuck in the process.

"They're not used to people handling them," Barton said. "Essentially, they're pretty tender creatures right now. They've



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A newborn calf sits on a pile of alfalfa as older calves eat the alfalfa from under it Wednesday outside of Hermiston.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A black angus cow is trapped in a squeeze chute while undergoing a veterinary check on Wednesday outside of Hermiston.

BMCC students Trevor Meyer, left, and Jackson Wall sort out one of the smaller black angus cattle from a group of cattle waiting for a veterinarian to check the animals on Wednesday east of Hermiston. The animals are part of a herd of more than 200 animals that were confiscated for animal neglect.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

already been through quite a cold spell."

Liscom, who works as an agriculture science instructor at BMCC, said they were contacted by the sheriff's office last week to lend a hand, and he decided it would be a valuable educational opportunity for his beef production students.

"We had a lab day anyway, so it worked out well that we could help out the county as well as learn," Liscom said.

Liscom said the class was not there to pass any judgment, or to determine who is right and who is wrong in the case.

"We're just here to help care for these animals as best we can," he said.

When it comes to cattle care, providing enough food and water is critical to the animals' survival. Chris Schachtschneider, a

professor of livestock and rangeland with Oregon State University Extension Service, said cows need to eat at least 2.5 percent of its body weight in dry feed every day.

Otherwise, Schachtschneider said the animals lose their fat reserves and the body essentially begins to eat away at muscles and other internal organs. Once that happens, it can be hard to reverse.

"If they're too far down that road, successful recovery is very unlikely," he said.

This year's unusually intense winter has caused some issues for local ranchers, Schachtschneider said, especially for those cows that have already begun calving. Schachtschneider said he's seen instances where ranchers are bringing calves inside and using hair-

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— Terry Rowan, Umatilla County Sheriff



dryers to keep them warm.

But as long as the animals have good feed and good water, Schachtschneider said they tend to withstand cold fairly well.

"The animals are really resilient to (the weather) if they have proper nutrition," he said.

Dave Grimes, lab technician for BMCC's agriculture department, worked on a ranch in Athena for 32 years and said inclement weather definitely makes things more challenging in the fields. However, ranchers should have an obligation to their animals.

"No matter what, they've got to be worked," Grimes said. "They've got to be taken care of."

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THEFT: Lost her teaching job after embezzling \$9K from Morrow County district

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gree theft applies to values of less than \$100, second-degree theft is for \$100-\$999, and first-degree theft covers values of at least \$1,000.

Court records show Hutchinson-Talaski has an arraignment Monday in Hermiston circuit court to face charges.

District Attorney Dan Primus said he had been in meetings much of the day and needed to look at the case file before commenting.

The chamber is a charitable nonprofit, and its tax returns are available from Guidestar.org, which specializes in gathering and providing data on nonprofits. The chamber's tax forms shows it lost \$25,221 in 2012, lost \$27,677 in 2013 and lost \$40,139 in 2014.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners on Dec. 22, 2015, gave the chamber and its visitor center \$10,000 — \$5,000 from community development funds and \$5,000 from tourism dollars. The county gave the chamber the same amounts in 2014, according to meeting minutes.

Commissioner Bill Elfering, who heads up economic and community development for the county, said Hutchinson-Talaski was the chamber director at that time and he never suspected her of anything dishonest.

"I had no clue," he said. "All of a sudden she just wasn't with the chamber any more ... I finally got to the bottom of it that she had

been accused of taking some money."

Those accusations, he said, were rumors and not as firm as an indictment.

Elfering said he didn't know if county funds were involved in any theft. The county at the time did not track what organizations did with financial awards. Elfering revamped the county's giving process to make it more formal and build in some accountability.

The Umatilla chamber was the target of a break-in and theft in January 2015, which Hutchinson-Talaski reported. Umatilla police Lt. Keith Kennedy said as far as he knew the two cases are not related.

Hutchinson-Talaski was a reporter in 2008 for the *Hermiston Herald*, the *EO's* sister publication. And from August 1992 until October 1998 she taught for the Morrow County School District. Records from the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission show she lost the job after embezzling approximately \$9,000 from the district.

Hutchinson-Talaski signed an order from the commission in May 1999 in which she agreed to surrender her Oregon teaching license and admit to the theft. The order also states a Morrow County grand jury indicted her on Dec. 14, 1998, on multiple counts of theft, and she pleaded guilty to first-degree theft. She avoided jail, had to pay back the \$9,000 and served two years of probation.

OREGON: House Minority Leader wants taxes more consistent for business owners

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stitutional by the Oregon Supreme Court in 2015.

Future obligations are at least \$22 billion more than the system can pay.

Regular increases in employee costs and benefits are a significant factor in driving up the state's expenses every year, according to a 2010 "reset report" on the state's budget authored during former Gov. Ted Kulongoski's administration.

That report explained, among other phenomena, how the state's revenue structure leads to revenue instability.

Both Democratic and Republican lawmakers have echoed this observation.

The state's general fund relies largely on income taxes, which can fluctuate wildly with swings in the economy.

Couple that with the fact that Oregon's economy is typically more extreme than the overall economy — dipping lower in recessions and rising higher in times of prosperity or recovery — and you get a pattern resembling the Swiss Alps, as state economists have pointed out.

Bentz says that the cost discussion has to start with public employee unions.

Should they agree to cut back, Bentz thinks three kinds of a consumption tax could be among the possibilities: a gross receipts tax, a value-added tax, and a commercial activity tax.

Each type, says Bentz, would ideally be broader-based than Measure 97, which would have imposed a 2.5 percent gross receipt tax on certain C-corporations with more than \$25 million in annual sales.

Whichever type leaders propose, it would ideally in turn be complemented by reductions in income taxes, Bentz said.

House Minority Leader Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, described his two conditions for agreeing to revenue changes: first, making the tax atmosphere more consistent for business owners; second, addressing costs, including PERS.

McLane argues businesses are asking themselves, "When does it end?"

If we make this investment in Oregon, how do we know the tax structure in Oregon just doesn't change?"

He pointed to Measure 97 as an example of what he characterized as the prevailing political attitude toward business. Both Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and Oregon Speaker of the House Tina Kotek advocated for the measure.

The proposal also mobilized the business lobby, which fought tooth and nail — and paid mightily — to defeat it at the ballot box.

According to Ferrioli, the starting point for negotiations on McLane's second condition — addressing costs, including PERS — is a list of possible changes to PERS that's been the focal point of a legislative work group led by Sens. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, and Tim Knopp, R-Bend.

Two bills were introduced in the Oregon Senate this month reflecting some of those ideas, including changes to how benefits are calculated. They have faced preliminary vetting by Legislative Counsel.

Unions said back in September that those potential changes that are now bills would not significantly reduce the system's unfunded liability because, legally, any changes lawmakers make can't touch benefits already accrued.

Kotek, Oregon's Speaker of the House, said Monday that while PERS has been the focus of the business community, it is not the only driver of state costs.

"I think there is a relatively simplistic understanding among some folks in the business community that there is only one problem and that cost driver is PERS," Kotek said Monday at a meeting of the Pamplin Media Group's Editorial Board. "I don't agree with that. I think it's a cost driver, but you have to remember the ballot measures that the voters passed in November, have, practically, an equal amount of additional expense on the state budget, over \$300 million. So there are a variety of things that people want us to do, and trying to figure all that out remains to be seen."