

UMATILLA

New department to focus on livability, economic development

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Umatilla's city council meeting on Tuesday night started with a request by councilor Mel Ray to add an executive session to the agenda discussing Mayor Dave Trott's performance.

Under ORS 192.660(i) a city council can meet in closed session "to review and evaluate the employment-related performance of the chief executive officer of any public body, a public officer, employee or staff member who does not request an open hearing."

Trott said he could not add an executive session to Tuesday's agenda at the last minute without giving the public proper notice, but requested the city recorder put it on the agenda for the council's next regular meeting on March 7. He also requested an open hearing.

The request by Ray marked a turning of the tables for Trott, who requested a special executive session to review city manager Russ Pelleberg's performance on Jan. 25. The city council did not take any action after the meeting that night. Pelleberg's annual review is scheduled for an executive session on Feb. 21.

Without the requested executive session, the council still had a full agenda Tuesday night, including the approval of a new community development department at city hall that will be focused on livability and economic development.

The city plans to hire a community development director to run the new department starting March 1, and to add an administrative assistant/accounting clerk for support sometime after.

Pelleberg said adding the new positions will allow city hall to move forward more quickly with new projects to improve the city.

"I think this is truly an investment in our community," he said.

The city's personnel



The Umatilla city council voted Tuesday to create a community development department to focus on livability and economic development.

"I think this is truly an investment in our community."

— Russ Pelleberg, city manager, on plans to hire a community development director

committee recommended the council adopt the resolution that would add the new director to the city's pay scale on the same level as the finance director, public works director and police chief. Councilor Roak TenEyck, who sits on the committee, said finance director Melissa Ince told them the city has the money to go ahead with hiring the new positions, and the committee "recognized the need for more help around the city."

On Tuesday the council also approved a resolution creating a low income sewer rate, mirroring the low income water rate the council has used for a few years. Both programs allow homeowners to apply to receive a monthly 10 percent reduction in their utility bill by showing proof of low income through their tax returns.

Pelleberg said there "hasn't been a great interest" in the water program, with only eight residents currently receiving the lower rate, so

he expected similar numbers on the sewer side and did not think there would be more than a \$500 per year impact on the city's budget.

The council meeting was more full than usual thanks to the attendance of several teenagers on the city's new youth advisory committee. The committee, made up of two Umatilla High School students from each grade, will set its own agenda and operate with the guidance of former city manager Bob Ward. It is chaired by UHS senior Cameron Sipe and will make recommendations to the city council.

Councilor Mark Ribich said he believes the committee is an important step for the city, because the council wants to make decisions that will help the community's youth feel like Umatilla is a place where they would want to build their future.

"Thank you all for joining this team, and I can't tell you how excited I am to have you," he said.

Governor Kate Brown's

proposed budget would close the Oregon State Police crime lab in Pendleton and cut funding that pays for detectives on the Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team (BENT). At the request of Pelleberg and Umatilla Police Chief Darla Huxel, the council approved two letters in support of continued funding for both. Councilors and audience members were also encouraged to attend the legislature's Ways and Means Committee meeting on Feb. 17 at 5 p.m. at Hermiston High School to make their voices heard on those and other funding issues.

Pelleberg told the council that he has agreed with the city managers of Hermiston, Stanfield and Echo to pursue state funding or other grant money to plan a river trail that would follow the Umatilla River from its mouth at the Columbia River all the way up to Echo.

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

BRIEFLY

Murder suspect transferred to Umatilla County Jail

BOARDMAN — A murder suspect arrested in September in Boardman was transferred to the Umatilla County Jail Wednesday morning from the Northern Oregon Regional Correctional Facility, The Dalles.

David Alexander Alvarez was transferred from the juvenile facility on Wednesday because he turned 18. Alvarez was indicted for the murder of Evencio Salas Birrueta, 27, of Irrigon, on Sept. 11, 2016. Alvarez's pretrial hearing is scheduled for March 2 at 8:15 a.m.

The shooting happened around 9 p.m. on Sept. 11 at the Wilson Road Mobile Home park in Boardman. Police arrived and found Salas shot in the "shoulder area of the arm." Salas died from the injuries.

Alvarez turned himself over to police in Washington state on Sept. 12, and was lodged at the juvenile facility in the Dalles.



Alvarez

Safe driving blitz underway

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agencies are running extra patrols to crack down on unsafe driving.

The Oregon Department of Transportation is funding the effort as part of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's annual "Click It or Ticket" campaign. Participating agencies are putting an emphasis on enforcing laws on the use of seatbelts and child restraints, texting and speeding. The safe driving blitz runs Feb. 6-19.

Motor vehicle crashes nationwide are the leading cause of death for children 1-12, according to the statement from the sheriff's office. Seat belts reduce fatality risk by 45-60 percent, and child safety seats reduce fatality risk for infants by 71 percent and for toddlers by 59 percent.

The sheriff's office also reported traffic studies show unbelted or improperly restrained occupants are five times more likely to be ejected from a vehicle than occupants who are belted properly, and the odds of surviving ejection are just one in four.

Oregon law requires all occupants to use safety restraints and children weighing less than 40 pounds to use a child seat or harness.

Thieves cause double trouble for Milton-Freewater couple

MILTON-FREEWATER — A Milton-Freewater couple's truck was stolen twice recently, exactly two weeks apart.

Jared and Tanya Hunt's 2016 Toyota Tundra was taken from their home Jan. 15 and recovered by the Milton-Freewater police near Rotary Field. The theft followed an earlier break-in to the couple's other vehicle in which keys to the Toyota were stolen, Jared Hunt suspects.

Trouble struck again Monday when the couple heard a noise outside their home. "Lo and behold, the truck was gone," Hunt said. By late morning police had again recovered the truck. Hunt credits police and Facebook, where his wife posted photos of the truck, for the timely recoveries.

"People notice on Facebook that there's a theft, and they keep an eye out for it," said Hunt, who plans to get the truck re-keyed. "There's some crappy people that stole it, but there's also some really nice people who pay attention." — Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THURSDAY, FEB. 9
TUMBLEWEED TOASTMASTERS, 6:30 a.m., Eastern Oregon Higher Education Center, 980 S.E. Columbia Drive, Hermiston. Visitors welcome. (541-567-3360)

PENDLETON KIWANIS CLUB, 7 a.m., Roosters Restaurant, 1515 Southgate, Pendleton. Guests welcome. (541-278-5785)

ARTS AND CRAFTS FROM THE DRY SIDE, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Hermiston Assembly of God Church, 730 E. Hurlburt Ave., Hermiston. Use Seventh Street entrance. Monthly business meeting at noon. (541-567-4446)

GOOD SHEPHERD MEDICAL CENTER AUXILIARY, 9:30 a.m., Good Shepherd Medical Center conference rooms 1 and 2, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. New members and junior auxiliary members welcome. (Cindy Schaan 541-667-3690)

NARFE CHAPTER 2115, 11:30 a.m., Shari's Restaurant, 319 S.E. Nye Ave., Pendleton. (Janet 541-980-3268)

ROUND-UP REPUBLICAN WOMEN, 11:45 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Red Lion Inn, 304 S.E. Nye Ave., Pendleton. Luncheon admission \$11 for paid and associate members, \$13 for non-members; RSVP by Wednesday at 8 a.m. February guest speaker: Pendleton Mayor John Turner will talk about the 2017 outlook. (Marcia Stewart 541-276-1206)

PENDLETON LIONS CLUB, 12 p.m., Roosters Restaurant, 1515 Southgate, Pendleton.

UMATILLA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, 12 p.m., Desert River Inn, 705 Willamette St., Umatilla. RSVP three days prior to meeting. (541-922-4825)

HERMISTON ROTARY CLUB, 12-1 p.m., Trinity Lutheran Church, 485 W. Locust Ave., Hermiston. (541-379-2338)

ALTRUSA INTERNATIONAL OF HERMISTON, 12 p.m., ARC Umatilla County, 215 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston.

DESERT BELLES GARDEN CLUB, 1 p.m., location varies, location varies, Hermiston. (541-567-8019)

HERMISTON HORSESHOE CLUB, 5 p.m., Hermiston High School Weber Field, 600 S. First St., Hermiston. (Rick Rebmam 541-720-6402)

PENDLETON TEA PARTY PATRIOTS, 5:30 p.m., The Saddle Restaurant, 2220 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton. 5:30 p.m. social, 6 p.m. meeting. Everyone welcome. (KaSandra Williams 541-310-1312)

PENDLETON EAGLES BURGERS AND KARAOKE, 6 p.m., Pendleton Eagles Lodge, 428 S. Main St., Pendleton. Members and guests welcome. (541-278-2828)

ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL, 6:30 p.m., Harris Jr. Academy gymnasium, 3121 S.W. Hailey Ave., Pendleton. (RaNiel Dunn 541-289-4696)

PENDLETON YOUTH SOCCER ANNUAL MEETING, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub, 230 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton. Rescheduled from January. Anyone interested in volunteering is encouraged to attend.*

COLUMBIA RIVER HARVESTERS, 7 p.m., Greenfield Grange 579, 209 N.W. First St., Boardman. (Sheila Volz 541-922-9464)

MAIN STREET COWBOYS, 7 p.m., Main Street Cowboys, 29 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton. (541-276-3901)

FRIENDS OF THE MILTON-FREEWATER PUBLIC LIBRARY ANNUAL MEETING, 7 p.m., Milton-Freewater Public Library Albee Room, 8 S.E. Eighth Ave., Milton-Freewater. Special presentation by Terrol Winsor on the Walla Walla Community College Quest Program for People Over 50 Years of Age. Everyone welcome. (541-938-8247)

HERMISTON ELKS LODGE NO. 1845, 7 p.m., Hermiston Elks Lodge, 480 E. Main St., Hermiston. (541-567-6923)

PENDLETON BIRD CLUB, 7 p.m., First Christian Church, 215 N. Main St., Pendleton. Potluck followed by Febuary speakers June Whitten and Marilyn Cripe presenting "Birding and Travels in Guyana." Everyone welcome.

FRIDAY, FEB. 10
PENDLETON DELPHIAN CLUB, 1:30 p.m., Vert Club Room, 345 S.W. Fourth St., Pendleton.

PENDLETON MASTERS SWIM CLUB, 5-6 p.m., Round-up Athletic Club pool, 1415 Southgate, Pendleton. \$5 per session coaching fee; non-RAC members pay \$8 pool fee per session. (Tania Wildbill 541-310-9102)

PENDLETON EAGLES LADIES AUXILIARY KITCHEN, 6-8 p.m., Pendleton Eagles Lodge, 428 S. Main St., Pendleton. (541-278-2828)

SATURDAY, FEB. 11
MEN'S BREAKFAST, 8 a.m., Bethel Assembly of God Church, 1109 Airport Road, Pendleton. (541-276-7559)

FRIENDS OF THE UMATILLA PUBLIC LIBRARY, 9 a.m., Umatilla City Hall, 700 Sixth St., Umatilla. (541-922-5704)

EASTERN OREGON CELTIC SOCIETY PIPERS GATHERING, 1 p.m., The Old Meeting House, 901 M Ave., La Grande. For pipers of all skill levels. Instruction is free, but a \$2 donation for use of the building is appreciated. (541-568-4643)

Trying to pass snow plows leads to crashes

Illegal to pass snow plow on the right on highways

East Oregonian

Drivers trying to pass Oregon Department of Transportation snow plows have caused at least two crashes this winter.

It's illegal to pass a snow plow on the right on a state highway, and unsafe to pass them on the left while they are plowing, according to an ODOT news release.

"We really need all motorists to slow down and give winter maintenance crews the room they need to do their job," ODOT District 12 manager Marilyn Holt said in a statement.

On Jan. 31 a snow plow rolled over on Interstate 84 near milepost 225 in Umatilla County after a semi-truck attempted to pass it on the right and instead hit the plow blade.

Ryan McLaughlin, 35, of Pendleton was driving the snow plow while Bryon Kilmer, 38, of Sweet Home was driving the semi. Neither driver was injured, but Kilmer was cited by police for unsafe passing.



An Oregon Department of Transportation snowplow truck sits on its side after a Jan. 31 collision with a semi-trailer truck in Umatilla County.

Photo contributed by Oregon State Police

Most ODOT snow removal equipment has wing plow extensions that stick out eight feet from the vehicle, sometimes from both sides. Snow being kicked up from those wings can make it difficult for drivers to see where the plow blades end and whether there is a second plow just ahead in the other lane. Cars trying to pass the plows can also be damaged by flying rocks and other debris mixed in with the snow being pushed up.

ODOT recommends motorists slow down and leave at least three car lengths between them and a plow. The plows will

eventually pull over and let people pass, although the news release cautioned that the roads ahead of the plows will be worse than the roads behind.

If a motorist's careless

driving does cause a snow plow to crash, that's less time for the plow to be clearing the road for other drivers. The crash could also cause injuries or high costs to the at-fault driver's insurance. ODOT said the damage claims for repairing the equipment and any damaged guard rails and signs can be as high as \$100,000.

Snow plow crashes aren't the only problems the severe winter has caused for the department. Overtime costs for ODOT workers this winter have been twice as high as they were last year. A total of 14,919 overtime hours have been paid out from Dec. 1 to Jan. 31, compared to 7,650 during the same period last year. The department has also seen an increase in costs for sand and de-icer.



PART-TIME DRIVER

Part-time driver needed to deliver East Oregonian publications throughout Eastern Oregon. Must be able to lift up to 50 pounds, have a valid driver's license and a good driving record. Shifts vary but will regularly include Tuesday nights. Duties may include non-driving work if extra hours are desired. Drug test, driving record and criminal background checks will be completed before hire.

Pick up an application at 211 SE Byers, Pendleton or e-mail resume and cover letter to hr@eomediagroup.com

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