

PENDLETON

# Winter misery hits historic levels

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

Pendleton has been recognized around the country for its rodeo and its blankets, but 2017 has brought a new thing to garner national attention — winter misery.

According to the Midwestern Regional Climate Center's Accumulated Winter Season Severity Index, which The Weather Channel has re-dubbed the "winter misery index," Pendleton has had one of the most severe winters in the U.S. compared to the type of cold weather it usually gets.

The climate center is a partner of the National Weather Service and compiles the index by measuring intensity and persistence of cold weather, the frequency and amount of snow and the amount and persistence of snow on the ground.

Pendleton is one of 13 cities, mostly clustered in the Northwest, that the index rated as "extreme," the highest among five ratings. Other communities classified under the extreme category include Walla Walla, Spokane and Boise.

Weather service hydrologist Marilyn Lohmann elaborated on what has made Pendleton's weather so "extreme" this winter.

Pendleton has had 43 days of snow on the ground compared to the 15 days the city experiences in an average year. The all-time record is 52 days, which was set during the 1985-1986 winter season.

Lohmann said the 29



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Drifting snow caused road closures in the Athena area last December.

days Pendleton spent below freezing is much higher than the average (17) and has already broken the record (28) with more than half a month left in February.

And the 40 inches of snowfall Pendleton has received this winter is almost 10 times the amount the city received last winter, when it got only 4.1 inches. Pendleton's average snow fall is 12.3 inches.

The impact of such a miserable winter goes beyond an index.

Besides long hours for road maintenance crews and a school district struggling to make up for snow days, other industries are feeling a financial chill from the cold weather.

Hoteliers, restaurateurs and merchants across Pend-

leton have felt adverse effects from wintry conditions, said Pat Beard, event recruiter for Travel Pendleton.

Beard said he couldn't cite any figures or statistics, but his discussions with local business owners have led him to believe that all the snow and ice has led to emptier cash registers.

Beard said the hotels near the freeway might benefit when Interstate 84 closes and downtown hotels see the usual business travelers they see every winter. But in general, locals and tourists alike have stayed away from hotels, restaurants and stores when the weather gets bad.

"I'm in favor of a lodging tax for everyone who wishes for a white Christmas," he said with a laugh.

It could be worse, Beard

said, noting his discussions with Baker City hotels that have been hit hard during a winter when the Oregon Department of Transportation has often closed the I-84 between Pendleton and Ontario.

Business and Pendleton residents alike can take solace in what the National Weather Service is predicting for the next few months.

Although future winter systems are still a possibility, Lohmann said the longterm forecast calls for the rest of February, March and April to have above average temperatures while maintaining higher levels of precipitation.

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HERMISTON

# City to bundle \$6.45 million bond

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

The Hermiston city council will consider the sale of \$6.45 million in bonds on Monday.

The sale would include \$1.75 million for construction at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, issued on behalf of local hoteliers and RV park owners who will pay for the bonds through a tourism promotion assessment of \$1 per room/RV space per night.

Another \$1.5 million would go toward creating a festival street along Southeast Second Street next to city hall, which will be paid off using property taxes collected by the urban renewal district.

The city would also use \$1.7 million — paid for by increased water rates — to install "smart meters" that are read remotely instead of by paying staff to go from home to home. The final \$1.5 million would upgrade the city's solids-handling equipment at the wastewater treatment plant, and would be paid for by increased sewer rates.

City manager Byron Smith said although each project has its own revenue source to pay them off, issuing them in one package backed by the full faith and credit of the city saves money on fees and interest.

Monday's city council meeting will also include approval of new bylaws for the Hermiston Public Library

board, an audit report and a resolution urging the state legislature to restore recreational immunity to cities.

Previously, the Public Lands Use Act had given cities and other entities immunity from lawsuits when people were injured while using their land for free for recreational purposes. However, an Oregon Supreme Court ruling recently interpreted the law to only apply to the landowner, meaning while the city itself could not be sued it could be forced to defend its employees in court if someone was injured while using a city park.

The council will also consider adopting an updated version of the Hermiston Planning Area Joint Management Agreement with Umatilla County regarding land use planning for land that is outside the city limits but inside the city's urban growth boundary. A memo in the council's agenda packet notes that substantial changes to the agreement include recognition of the Lower Umatilla Basin Ground Water Management Area, application of city street standards to county development in the UGB and city maintenance of new storm drainage improvements installed upon request of the city on a county road.

The 7 p.m. meeting at city hall will be preceded by a 6 p.m. work session featuring a presentation by Hermiston School District about its upcoming bond campaign.

HERMISTON

# EOTEC approves contract for maintenance, janitorial

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center board approved a contract Friday for maintenance and janitorial services.

The contract is with Mabel Largaespada Dean's Services, which will provide janitorial services for \$22 per hour per person, and maintenance/lawn care for \$40 per hour per person. The board previously voted to seek out a contractor to handle those services after concerns that business manager Heather Cannell was devoting time to cleaning bathrooms and setting up tables that she should be spending on marketing the event center.

As members of the EOTEC board continue to work on a marketing and operations plan for the project, Cannell and city of Hermiston finance director Amy Palmer have been working on financial reports that give the board a clearer picture of the costs and revenues associated with each event.

A report presented Friday of event revenue and direct expenses for those events was not a full picture because it only showed revenue that has actually been received,



EO file photo

The Hermiston Farm Fair in November was one of several events at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in 2016. EOTEC brought in \$26,444 in revenue since July 1.

Palmer said. However, the report showed \$26,444 in event revenue since July 1 and \$6,779 in direct costs for those events. It did not include general overhead costs for running the event center or personnel costs.

Money for marketing EOTEC comes from a \$1 per room per night tourism promotion assessment on hotels and RV parks in west Umatilla County, and the hoteliers last year added a second dollar that will be used to pay off construction bonds the city of Hermiston agreed to issue on their behalf. Board chair and city manager Byron Smith said the city council will be asked

to approve multiple construction bonds, including \$1.75 million for EOTEC, on Monday.

Board member Vijay Patel noted that TPA revenue is down slightly from the year before. He said hotel revenue in Hermiston has taken a hit in part because an increase in hotel rooms in the Tri-Cities has decreased the amount of overflow to Hermiston hotels.

On the construction side,

John Eckhardt of Knerr Construction predicted they will start breaking ground on the barns on Tuesday, although he cautioned that estimate was somewhat dependent on weather since there are some surveying activities they can't do with snow on the ground. In December Eckhardt said they hoped to begin construction by the end of January.

Carl Hendon from Hendon Construction reported that work is going well on the rodeo arena, and he anticipated concrete work would be finished by the end of March so that they can start working on installing things like bleachers and pens.

In January he reported that weather delays had pushed the project's expected completion date from June 1 to June 14, but said Friday that since then "we've probably actually picked up time."

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HERMISTON

# Officer nabs three wanted men, recovers stolen vehicles

East Oregonian

An officer who stopped to help motorists Thursday afternoon near Hermiston instead arrested three suspects who led to the recovery of three stolen vehicles.

Umatilla County undersheriff Jim Littlefield said Loren Westmoreland, an officer with the Umatilla County Community Justice Department, was driving on South Cabana Road near Johnston Lane, Hermiston, when he saw a Honda Civic and a Chevrolet Celebrity with their hoods open. Westmoreland stopped to see if he could help, Littlefield said.

Three men were in the Honda, and Westmoreland ran the license plates of the cars and discovered the Honda was stolen several weeks ago from Atkinson Staffing, 80796 N. Highway 395, Hermiston. The officer also found the license plates on the Chevrolet belonged to another car.

Jesus Pantoja, 26, of 1230 Ridgeway Ave., Hermiston, was behind the wheel of the Honda, so Westmoreland arrested him for possession of a stolen vehicle and for outstanding warrants.

The other men, Rigoberto Tena Rosales, 22, of 230 E. Dogwood Ave., Hermiston, and Luis Alberto Roman, 21, 423 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston, also had warrants, and Rosales faces a charge of possession of a stolen vehicle for the Chevrolet, which also was from Hermiston. Littlefield said all three men had methamphetamine, so Westmoreland added a drug possession charge to each.

And that license plate belonged to a third stolen vehicle, Littlefield said, which deputies found at Pantoja's residence.

Littlefield said it was good police work. Pantoja, Rosales, and Roman remained in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, as of Friday.

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**Chrissy Woollard** has joined John Cimmiyotti as a new Financial Advisor for Raymond James Financial Services in the Pendleton office. Chrissy has been with Raymond James for 9 years and currently she holds a series 7 & 66 and Life, Health, Variable insurance licenses. Chrissy graduated from the University of Wyoming with a BS in Science and a minor in Business. Chrissy is a native of Pendleton and a Pendleton High School graduate. Chrissy enjoys helping individuals, families and businesses to attain their financial goals. **Chrissy can be contacted by calling the local office at 541-276-9184.**  
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