

COMPOST: Facility will be zero-discharge

Continued from 1A

submitting its land use application, which took place Wednesday at Athena Elementary School. About 20 people attended the meeting, including neighboring landowners who voiced their concerns about odor, water use and increased traffic.

Knudsen did not hide the fact that composting is a stinky business, but said the smell would be intermittent and not a nuisance.

"We're not trying to hide anything," Knudsen said. "This is what we do, and we want to do it in a way that our neighbors aren't offended."

As it is, the company receives relatively few complaints about its composting facility on "Mushroom Corner" north of Olympia, an area much more densely populated than Adams or Athena. Robert Moody, compliance supervisor with the Olympic Region Clean Air Agency, said they have received seven odor complaints about Ostrom's since 2007.

However, Moody said most people who live near Ostrom's are well aware of the smell by now and do not file complaints.

Knudsen said there is "no question" the company gets comments about odor, and they do everything they can to manage the smell. The entire process is aerated, he added, and nothing is left to

become anaerobic.

The composting facility would be zero-discharge, Knudsen said, with wastewater stored in a large holding pond and recycled. Since the mushrooms are grown at a separate farm, he said there will be some increased traffic but expects no more than six trucks a week.

Bob Waldher, senior planner with the Umatilla County Planning Department, said they are still waiting on an application from Ostrom's for a conditional use permit. He anticipates there will be a land use hearing before the planning commission on March 23.

Once the county determines land use compatibility, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality will examine the project and decide whether to issue a compost facility permit. Jamie Jones, natural resource specialist with DEQ's solid waste program, said they will consider everything from the size of the facility to potential nuisance odors and water management.

Knudsen said they have spent the last two years searching far and wide for a new location to expand their facilities.

"If there is a right location for a composting facility, this is it," he said.

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WOLVES: Not currently game animal in Oregon

Continued from 1A

public safety and other vital services, said Craig Pope, a Polk County commissioner.

"We will have no one else to call if we let this partnership fail," Pope said. "Counties cannot make up the difference of this funding hole."

The Oregon Hunters Association and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation testified in favor of restoring the state's full contribution to the predator control program, which they say is necessary to maintain a balance between predators and deer and elk.

Under Gov. Kate Brown's recommended 2017-2019 budget, the ODA would eliminate \$460,000 in state funding for the USDA's Wildlife Services division, which kills problematic predators.

An ODA program that compensates ranchers for wolf depredation would be funded at \$211,000 under the governor's proposal, compared to \$233,000 in the 2015-2017 biennium.

The co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, meanwhile, have proposed a "budget framework" for the upcoming biennium that would decrease funding for the wolf compensation program "and/or reduce funding for predator control."

While the co-chairs' budget framework doesn't specify the exact reductions for ODA programs, it does propose cutting state funding for all natural resource agen-

cies to \$405 million, down from \$413.6 million during the previous biennium.

Rep. Lew Frederick, D-Portland, said he's concerned about livestock losses and supports continued assistance from the state but raised concerns about possible hunting of wolves.

While wolves aren't currently hunted in Oregon, controlled hunts could be allowed during a later phase of wolf recovery under the state's management plan for the species.

Frederick cautioned against the display of "trophy" wolves killed by hunters, which he said would erode public support for the predator control and wolf compensation programs.

"That's a political situation that will shut down a great deal," he said.

Aside from predator control, other ODA programs are on the chopping block under the proposals from Brown and the co-chairs of the Joint Ways & Means Committee.

A coalition of natural resource industry groups — including the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Association of Nurseries, Oregon Cattlemen's Association and others — urged lawmakers not to curtail those programs.

For example, the co-chairs' budget framework recommends decreasing the number of positions in ODA's agricultural water quality program and shifting food safety and pesticide programs from the general fund to program fees.

FIRE: Ciraulo said department lacks budget to expand staff beyond its daily average of six

Continued from 1A

open rooms, the design of the new station has individualized sleeping quarters that afford them more privacy and quiet.

The new layout would also create equitable space for female employees. When the fire department hired its first female firefighter/paramedic last year, they had to turn a closet into makeshift living quarters and make the public bathroom with a shower the unofficial women's locker room.

Because of the lack of adequate space for women, Ciraulo said the three women in the department's reserve program can't stay overnight and he's unsure what he would do with another woman on their hiring list.

"That's discrimination if I don't give her a fair chance because I have nowhere to put her," he said.

The station's proposed new location at the old St. Anthony property at 1601 S.E. Court Ave. is another sticking point with potential voters.

While moving the station one mile east and away from the center of the city seems counterintuitive, the Mackenzie report showed that easy access to Interstate 84 via the Highway 11 viaduct would actually improve response times for most areas of the city.

Additionally, Ciraulo said moving the station would create a geographic triangle between the main station on Southeast Court, Fire Station No. 2 on Southgate and the unstaffed airport fire station that would maximize coverage.

Staffing

An aging station isn't the department's only issue, and moving across town won't solve all its problems.

At a meeting Tuesday, Ciraulo said he was on "pins and needles" when Pendleton firefighters responded to the North Main Street house fire on Christmas Day.

That's because he was able to send out only six firefighters to the scene, the only personnel on duty. The National Fire Protection Association recommends at least 15 for the average house fire.

Even with mutual aid from the Pilot Rock Rural Fire Protection District, the Umatilla Tribal Fire Department and Umatilla County Fire District 1, Ciraulo said the fire team never met the minimum threshold.

Ciraulo said the department has neither the facilities nor the budget to expand staff beyond its daily average of six, which is currently comprised of 21 career emergency personnel (excluding administrators) and 10 reserves — on-call employees who are paid an hourly wage when they're utilized. To add to that roll, the department is applying for a SAFER grant, a federal program that would provide \$1.2 million for six firefighters for three years, provided the city put up a \$95,000 match.

Retaining the new employees after the grant funding runs out would be a challenge, Ciraulo told the council, but he thought it was possible through a combination of overtime reduction, an increase in the number of calls the department responds to, and attrition and retirement of current staff members.

The fire department's lack



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
The female dorm room at the Pendleton Fire Department's main station is a converted storage closet. Female firefighters still have no private restroom or shower facilities in the station.

of a volunteer program would also be addressed through the SAFER grant.

The grant provides \$550,000 to hire a new assistant chief in charge of volunteer coordination for four years with no local match required.

In addition to currently not having room to put them, Ciraulo said neither he nor assistant chief/fire marshal Shawn Penninger has the time or resources to properly establish a volunteer program. If they had the space and funding, Ciraulo said he would aim to add 30 volunteers to the department.

Equipment

If he thought it was politically feasible, Ciraulo said he would add another \$5 million to the bond just to address the department's equipment needs.

As it is, the bond sets aside \$630,000 for new Jaws of Life extrication equipment, heart monitors, an ambulance and other emergency equipment.

The department is also applying for the federal Assistance for Firefighters grant, which would provide \$398,000 for a fire engine (\$36,000 city match) and \$191,000 for oxygen tanks (\$17,000 city match).

Ciraulo's long term problem remains finding sustainable funding for equipment outside bonds and grants.

A fee on utility bills provides about \$170,000 per year to the Public Safety Capital Reserve Fund each year, but that's not enough to address the \$400,000 in equipment replacement needs of the fire department left alone the needs of the police department, which the fund also covers.

Ciraulo said he and Pendleton police chief Stuart Roberts have met about this issue and discussed eventually offering a "cafeteria menu" of options to the city council regarding new sources of revenue for equipment replacement, focusing mostly on ways they can derive revenue from people who use Pendleton's public safety services but don't live in town.

As for training, both the bond and the grants could help make streamline the process.

The new facility has a new training tower and more space, and the Assistance for Firefighters grant includes \$170,000 for training.

The campaign

Passing a bond requires something that Ciraulo is legally barred from doing — campaigning.

Off-duty firefighters and city council members formed the Pendleton Public Safety

Political Action Committee to handle that job.

At a PAC-sponsored campaign kickoff event at Sundown Bar & Grill Thursday, a few dozen supporters sipped cocktails and picked at the spread as city councilor Scott Fairley and former city councilor Chuck Wood gave their pitch.

There was a symbolic importance to holding it at Sundown, which burned down in 1999 when it was still known as Raphael's before the owners rebuilt it and renamed the restaurant. There's still a picture of that fire in the front lobby of the current fire station.

Wood told the audience about the council's previous attempt to get a bond on the ballot in 2014.

The \$10 million bond proposed building a fire station for \$4.5 million while spending the rest of the money on deferred maintenance for other city facilities.

The proposal never made it to the ballot after city officials missed an advertising deadline, but nearly three years later, Wood said the fire station cost was an underestimate. In a rush to replace bonds coming off property tax rolls, the city used in-house estimates to come up with a price tag, which the Mackenzie report later showed to be unrealistically low.

"This isn't a Rolls Royce or a gold-plated station," Wood said. "This is a bare bones station."

With the city's general obligation bonds now expired, Wood said the PAC's challenge will be to convince voters that adding 62 cents

per \$1,000 of assessed value to their tax bills isn't a dramatic increase, but rather a development that will bring the tax rate back to historic levels.

The PAC will have money to get their message out.

According to the Oregon Secretary of State's Office, the Pendleton Public Safety PAC has raised more than \$10,000 since December, with more people opening their checkbooks at the kickoff event. PAC members said their goal is to raise between \$20,000 and \$25,000.

Wood said the PAC plans to use the money to buy yard signs, campaign literature, advertisements all the other traditional hallmarks of local campaigns.

Umatilla County Fire District 1 chief Scott Stanton said messaging is essential to a public safety campaign.

After a set of measures failed in 2014, voters agreed to merge the Hermiston and Stanfield fire districts together, a move that raises an extra \$900,000 per year for staff and vehicle replacement.

Stanton said Pendleton may have an easier time explaining a bond rather than a merger that required approval of two separate ballot measures and a new tax rate that either rose, fell or stayed the same based on where district voters lived.

At the same time, district supporters were able to sell the merger to voters as an alternative to a bond or levy.

Ciraulo said there aren't many alternatives for the Pendleton Fire Department if the bond doesn't pass.

The city could explore turning the municipal fire department into an independent fire district like UCFD, Ciraulo said, but that would shift responsibility from one entity to another.

If the city pursued another bond, Ciraulo doesn't think there's anything he could trim from the list of requests.

In the meantime, Ciraulo said he has a moral imperative to move his employees out of a building he views as unhealthy and dangerous.

Pendleton voters will decide the fate of the fire station May 16.

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

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