

# EAST OREGONIAN

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### OUR VIEW: MAY ELECTION

# Fire bond shores up one problem

A little over two years ago, this editorial board was not inclined to support a new fire station in Pendleton.

We knew that Fire Station 1, located on Southeast Court Ave., was far from ideal. But the city of Pendleton and its fire and ambulance department were scrambling to get a replacement bond on the ballot and neither entity was able to say where exactly the new station would be built. And their estimate of the cost of the project seemed to have been picked out of a hat. But both sides knew that, politically, being able to continue a bond levy was an easier sell to voters than asking them to take on a new one.

The ducks were far from in a row — they were scattered so far across the pond that the city was unable to get the bond legally advertised in time to get it on the ballot.

And it is a good thing they didn't. We were not inclined to support the measure at that time and we don't think the voters were either.

But time has passed. Some things have changed in Pendleton — there is a new mayor and a new fire chief. But other things haven't changed — the city has more needs than it has money to tackle them.

And in that old environment, new leadership is asking for our dollars to build a new fire station.

First the details:

The bond has a total cost of \$9.93 million. The money would be used to purchase land and build a newer, larger, better fire station on the old St. Anthony site, 25 blocks east from the current location. The rest of the money would be used to update some old equipment, including the purchase of a new fire engine, oxygen tanks and a Jaws of Life.

Now for our opinion:

A clear plan and clear leadership have put us clearly in favor of the fire bond. We still see many needs throughout our fair city, and see lots of places that \$10 million could be applied.

But the fact of the matter is that the 1950s era fire station is a liability to the city. Firefighters are living and working in an unsafe environment in a leaky, poorly-designed garage that

does no favors to the firefighters, EMTs or the people they are serving.

The new site is not perfect, but it is as perfect as the current one. Most response times will improve, while response times to the North Hill will be delayed by only a few seconds. And it has the added benefit of partly filling in a massive hole in Pendleton city limits, hopefully helping to reinvigorate a struggling neighborhood east of the Pendleton Woolen Mills.

But a new fire hall cannot be about anything other than fire protection. And the new site allows for safer places for professional and volunteer firefighters to work and rest and train, and for female firefighters/EMTs to have the same opportunity to succeed as their male counterparts — as is required by law. No longer will truck exhaust filter into sleeping quarters, no longer will female recruits share shower space in a public restroom, no longer will the public have a difficult time visiting the station to communicate with staff.

Perhaps it's obvious that something new will be better. For \$9.93 million it better be.

And you can understand why some voters would remain skeptical and defiant. Everyone feels tapped out, especially in a town like Pendleton where growth has been stagnant and taxes continue to increase.

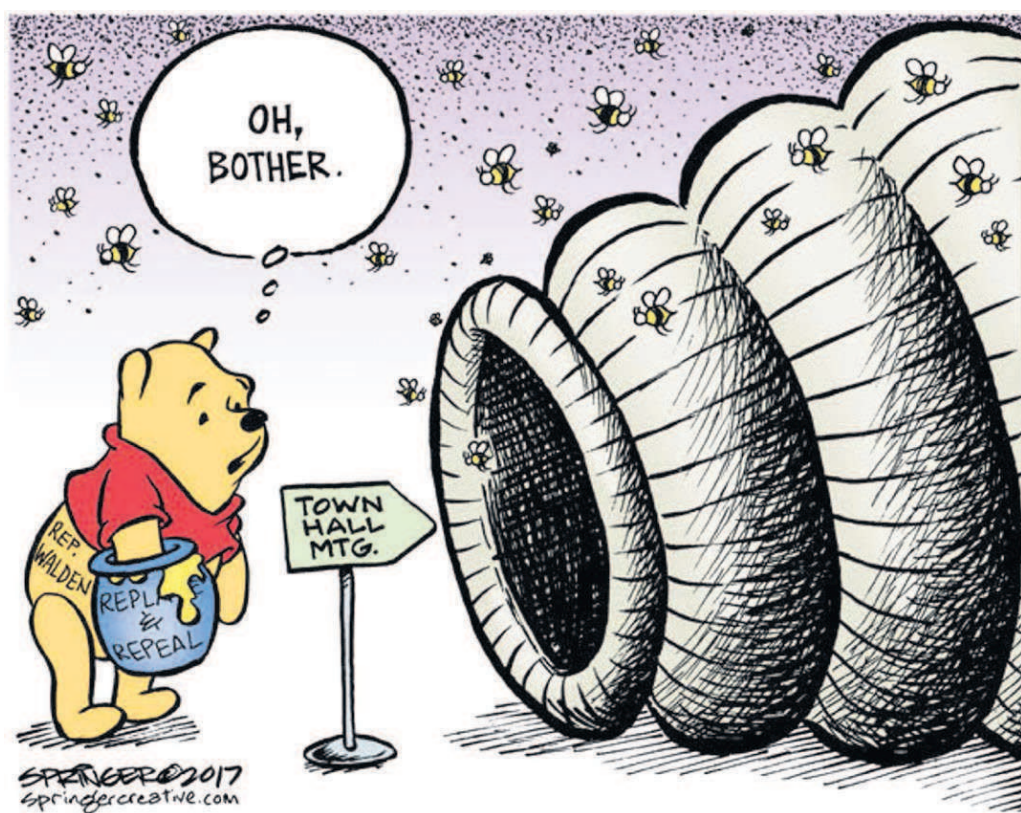
But this bond offers an opportunity to solidify a base upon which strong communities are built: public safety and education.

Over the course of a few years, area voters backed an important expansion at Blue Mountain Community College, and Pendleton voters gave the go-ahead to a rebuild of our elementary schools. And now a fire station sits ready for an upgrade.

We understand that Pendleton needs lots of fixing. And that fixing will require a lot of money. The Pendleton Fire and Ambulance Service understands that, too.

This is a chance to fix one of those problems at a price we believe is acceptable. We think voters should take the opportunity and do it.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of publisher Kathryn Brown, managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, and opinion page editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



### OTHER VIEWS

## Positive growth occurs when we're open to change

Change presents itself again as a pathway towards a community vision, revitalizing downtown and becoming more efficient at managing the Hermiston Community and Conference Center.

One of the great things that I often hear from people discussing Hermiston is, "you're such a progressive, forward-looking community that doesn't get hung-up on name hierarchy or past accomplishments."

You just keep moving forward to make your community better." We've been a successful, growing community because we embrace change as a way toward greater opportunities.

More than 2,200 community members participated in the "Livable Hermiston" public outreach campaign to gauge the community's priorities. Two of the top concepts were providing added youth and family activities while revitalizing downtown through projects which will attract visitors.

On Tuesday, the City Council will use that clear community message to consider bringing the operations of the community center under the umbrella of our Parks & Recreation Department.

Make no mistake; this decision is not about "closing the community center," frankly, it's the exact opposite. Operating the community center through the Parks & Recreation Department will allow for increased space for youth activities, while still being available for community events.

Two years ago, the Chamber provided me with many historical news clippings regarding the original fundraising drive for the community center in 1994. I enjoyed reading about this great community fundraising



DAVID DROTZMANN  
Comment

project spearheaded by names we all still recognize today, such as Bryan Wolfe, Tim Mabry and Ed Brookshier.

I was struck by an article in the *Hermiston Herald's* special, "Community Center Insert" on May 17, 1994 titled, "New center is big business." An excerpt from the article reads, "both the (fundraising) committee and the donors have gone to great pains to stress that this is a community center, not a convention center."

Now as the city looks to refocus the community center back to its original intent, we invite the Hermiston Chamber to build on our longstanding positive relationship of supporting Hermiston business and the needs of our community.

The City is offering free office space in a newly renovated portion of one of our only historic buildings downtown. If the Hermiston Chamber wishes, we see significant long-term opportunities to

continue supporting each other by possibly contracting with them to operate the historic building as a visitor's center which will attract people downtown and allow them space to continue to support Hermiston's fantastic local businesses.

I know change can be unnerving at times, although it helps to remember that change and working together is what has made Hermiston the community it is today.

I invite you as a community to join me on Tuesday night at 6:30 to share your views and hear our open discussion regarding Hermiston's future.

David Drotzmann is the mayor of Hermiston.

Show up at the next Hermiston City Council meeting, at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday to share your views.

### LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

### YOUR VIEWS

#### New Pendleton fire station would be point of civic pride

As a homeowner of modest means, I look at new bond proposals carefully, weighing the cost against the benefit to the community. I don't give every bond request an automatic thumbs up. But there are projects I've supported, like the one that transformed Hawthorne into the Early Learning Center and rebuilt and upgraded other educational facilities, that I feel extremely proud of. That sense of civic pride is something that I'm very willing to contribute towards.

When I think about being able to help upgrade Fire Station 1 from a substandard facility that doesn't support adequate training opportunities to one that will better serve the community and the firefighters who protect us, that's a cause I'm ready to support.

Roberta Lavadour  
Pendleton

#### Despite your hustle, time is always gaining

The year I entered high school we got a new football coach. He made his entry by telling us we would do great things if we would hustle. He declared we would hear that word often. Hustle. In our fundamentals, blocking and tackling and running. In our plays and on and off the field: Hustle!

In Echo's small school he was also the coach for every sport. Our basketball prowess, our track stamina, our winning ways in baseball all depended on whether we had hustle. Tennis was coached by a volunteer so I doubt tennis players ever learned to hustle.

Coach was retired Navy and spoke Navy

blue. Because of his favorite sport his face was flat with only cartilage for a nose. Because of his favorite sport every football player had to go out for boxing. Boxing would make men of us if we would hustle.

We put on gloves, learned to feint and weave and duck, pounded on our friends, and hustled. He set up smokers where we boxed mostly with our classmates since few other coaches had his boxing enthusiasm. Nevertheless, we had to hustle.

Last time I saw coach he came to our 50th class reunion. He remembered more and better stories than ever occurred. He spoke slower and still had a flat face. In those fifty years both he and we had lost a lot of hustle.

Don Reese  
Echo

#### Fire Station 1 a subpar building for firefighting

If you read my previous editorial, (*East Oregonian*, March 25) you know how I feel about the current Pendleton Fire Station 1. I wrote it from the viewpoint of a previous employee to give the reader a feel for what it is like to operate out of that structure.

Now I will attempt to look at Station 1 from the viewpoint of a customer, and attempt to show what I see as I come into the station as a private citizen.

The chief's office is of sufficient size, but lacks storage. The 8x12 foot assistant chief/ fire marshal's office, which I worked out of for nearly eight years, has its limitations. The office was adequate for a time, but was very limited during my tenure.

There is little room to store building plans, perform plan reviews, conduct

interviews with fire victims/suspects, or meet with citizens or contractors. Such meetings were held at the Oregon State Police office, the building department at city hall, or on site.

Privacy and room for more than three people in the AC/FM office was not possible. There is no view out of either office. There is literally no place in Station 1 to hold a private conversation without the possibility of being overheard.

The front office storage hosts straining shelves of copy paper, tablets, and other office supplies. A file cabinet is overflowing with patient reports and personnel records. The copy machine partially covers the fire extinguisher cabinet.

There is no waiting area with seating in the front office. ADA accessibility is with difficulty. There is no escape from the three offices, making employees in this area vulnerable to attack. A very real threat.

As a citizen of Pendleton, this concerns me. I would expect to be treated the same in Station 1 as in any other office building in Pendleton: ADA accessible, comfortable waiting area, private meeting rooms, and an expectation of safety while within the building. Station 1 currently provides little of this.

I urge you to visit Station 1 and take a long hard look at how you would react if you were to be in need of the services of personnel in this station. Would it meet your needs? How about your parents, children, people you care for? Would this station provide for you, and them, what you would expect of a professional entity?

Jack Remillard  
Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal (retired)  
Pendleton

#### Oregon prisons continue to cut back on healthy meals

I just read where another Two Rivers Correctional Institution inmate passed away unexpectedly. How many times has this happened? I do know there is violence in prisons, but how many have to die unexpectedly before we find out why?

The medical care at the prisons leave a lot to be desired. Everyone is under the impression that they get excellent care — not.

The prisons put off sending them to outside doctors for as long as they can get away with it, unless you raise holy you-know-what.

They also are cutting food at the prisons; at EOIC they no longer get fruit except on Sunday night and sometimes for lunch. They also want to cut night time snacks for diabetics. For some this could be a death sentence. I heard that TRCI is cutting calories, giving smaller portions to the inmates and for one month no one had eggs because they were too expensive.

Legislatures need to, as I have said before, look at reforming Measure 11. There is a bill being presented but it will affect only a very small portion of the inmate population. I know, inmates are scum, right? They don't deserve to be treated like humans, right? Gov. Brown needs to cut the budget and what better way to do it then to provide no nourishing food for inmates or proper medical care. We must pay for the illegals above Americans and veterans, of which I am both, and many in prison are also.

Barbara Dickerson  
Milton-Freewater