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EAST OREGONIAN

APRIL 22-23, 2017

141st Year, No. 135

WINNER OF THE 2016 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Tall grass and wild flowers grow in an open area of the north bank of the Umatilla River in Pendleton.

A lot of potential

Possible development of Pendleton riverfront property dismays neighbors

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

As long as one keeps their eyes on the water, the north bank of the Umatilla River near Northwest Seventh Street looks relatively untouched.

Gnarled trees and fallen branches give way to tall grass, wildflowers and an old trail from Pendleton's early days. You can forget for a moment that you are square in the middle of a town of more than 16,000 people.

Peg and Jim Willis can hear the roar of the Umatilla from the porch of their Seventh Street home. They were dismayed when the city of Pendleton began taking steps to attract a housing development to the section of riverfront near their house.

As the Pendleton City Council charges forward in carrying out its goal of expanding the city's housing inventory, city officials will have to contend with the push and pull of alleviating Pendleton's tight housing market and protecting existing residents' quality of life.

The Umatilla River has been an integral part of the married couple's lives since they bought the house 40 years ago for \$23,000.

The space between their home and the river



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The remains of a step ladder adorn a tree in a forested area on the north bank of the Umatilla River in Pendleton. The city of Pendleton has begun taking steps to attract a housing developer to this section of the riverfront.

became a favorite play spot for their kids and eventually their grandkids, a place where they frequently encountered wildlife.

Between the two of them, the Willis provided a brief recollection of some of the creatures they've seen along the river — deer,

raccoons possums, beavers, woodchucks. Jim Willis said he saw an otter one winter.

When the weather warms up, the couple can hear the sound of hammers striking wood

See RIVERFRONT/14A

Lawmakers pitch cost containing measures

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Concluding a week of heightened budget rhetoric at the Oregon Legislature, a bipartisan group of legislators say the state's budget crunch could be addressed in the short- and long-term through a score of possible measures, including a hiring freeze and tweaks to the state's public pension system.

However, it's not yet clear how much these strategies, if implemented, would save as lawmakers try to address a \$1.6 billion shortfall in general fund revenue necessary to maintain current services.

Sen. Richard Devlin, D-Tualatin, a member of the group and co-chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means — which hammers out the state's budget — says the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Office could produce an estimate of potential savings as early as next week.

Devlin and four other lawmakers have been meeting privately to find ways to cut down on state spending. They released their 18 cost-containment ideas publicly for the first time Friday.

The legislators are: Sen. Jackie Winters, R-Salem; Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner; Rep. Nancy Nathanson, D-Eugene; and Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose.

Those ideas include issuing bonds only for larger projects so as to cut debt costs, and increasing current and future employees' share of retirement costs.

"These are sort of the core of what we think it would take to start to do some of the things to bend the cost curve over the long term," Devlin said, noting the list was not

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Devlin



Smith



Nathanson



Winters



Johnson

Bill would ease development of solar panels on farmland

Co-op faces higher state renewable energy mandate

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

State Rep. Greg Smith (R-Heppner) is sponsoring legislation that would make it easier for the Umatilla Electric Cooperative to develop solar power in Umatilla and Morrow counties, allowing the utility to comply with statewide renewable energy goals.

The issue came up during a recent proposal by UEC to expand its Moyer-Tolles Solar Station east of Umatilla. Since the facility is located within the Columbia Valley American Viticul-

ture Area, it is technically considered high-value farmland which requires a special land use exception for solar farms larger than 12 acres.

UEC received permission from Umatilla County last month to go ahead with the project, which will increase the capacity at Moyer-Tolles from 1.3 to 10 megawatts. But the co-op estimates it will need 100 total megawatts of solar generation by 2025 to meet Oregon's renewable portfolio standard, meaning more development is necessary.

Craig Campbell, a lobbyist representing UEC at the Capitol, laid out the conundrum at a hearing Tuesday before the House Agriculture and

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HERMISTON

BMCC determined student with gun on campus was not a threat

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Blue Mountain Community College administrators determined a student who brought a gun onto the Hermiston campus did not pose a threat.

Casey White-Zollman, the college's vice president of public relations, also reported the college will review its policies and procedures regarding guns on campus.

Wednesday afternoon, a student told staff that another student had a handgun that was partially visible. The staff contacted the Hermiston Police Department, which cleared the building as a precaution. Members of the Umatilla County

Sheriff's Office, Oregon State Police and Umatilla County Fire District 1 also responded.

The armed student was a former police officer with a concealed carry permit.

The college, however, prohibits people with a concealed carry permit to bring a gun on campus. Per the college's weapons policy: "In accordance with BMCC Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct, students are prohibited from possessing or using firearms, explosives, dangerous chemicals, substances, or instruments or other weapons which can be used to inflict bodily harm on

See BMCC/11A

