



**RAILROAD
REPLACING
10,000 TIES**
REGION/3A



**HERMISTON
SERVES UP
A WIN**
SPORTS/1B

House to
vote on GOP
health care
bill **NATION/7A**

EAST OREGONIAN

THURSDAY, MAY 4, 2017

141st Year, No. 143

WINNER OF THE 2016 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Agricultural burn has silver lining

The smoke from an agricultural burn condenses into a cloud Wednesday over a field north of Pendleton. According to the National Weather Service in Pendleton it was a PyroCumulus, or fire cloud, formed by rising smoke.

PENDLETON SCHOOL DISTRICT
SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

Candidates make their pitch to community

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The four finalists vying to become the next Pendleton School District superintendent got their first chance to make an impression on the community, and the community got its first chance to make an impression on them.

Following a day of school tours and meetings with local education officials, the candidates gathered at Pendleton High School to meet with staff and the public before retreating behind closed doors for an additional round of interviews with the school board.

Unlike the last superintendent search in 2016, none of the finalists are from Eastern Oregon and almost all of them are sitting superintendents.

The board's final choice will replace former superintendent Andy Kovach, who formally left the district Friday.

• **Aaron Chavez** doesn't suffer from a lack of superintendent experience, having served in a series of progressively larger school districts across Washington.

After serving as a classroom teacher for six years in Finley, Washington, Chavez ascended to superintendent/principal position at Almira School District

See CANDIDATES/10A



Chavez



Fritsch



Stroder



Wagner

BMCC prepares for tuition hikes

Community colleges grapple with stagnant budgets

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

After considering a \$7-per-credit hike in tuition, the six Blue Mountain Community College board members held their noses and voted in favor. Board member Susan Plass admitted feeling sick to her stomach before the official vote at the April meeting.

"It's a travesty that the state is putting the cost of education more and more on the backs of the students," Plass said. "Students struggle enough as it is with all the expenses."

The BMCC board is not alone as it struggles to find revenue. The state's other 16 community colleges are also preparing for pain as Oregon legislators grapple with a \$1.6-billion budget shortfall.

Many, if not all, of the state's community colleges are considering similar bumps of tuition or fees. Judging by preliminary budget figures, state support will likely remain flat while costs keep rising, said BMCC President Camille Preus.

"PERS, health care, salaries and wages — every fixed cost we have is escalating," Preus said. "The state proposal for 2017-19 is \$554 million, which is exactly what it was in 2015-17."



EO file photo

Blue Mountain Community College will increase its tuition unless the Legislature provides an increase in funding this biennium.

One concern is a collection of unfunded mandates such as Title IX, minimum wage and family leave.

"Across the state, for the 17 community colleges, there is \$70 million in unfunded mandates," Preus said. "That's about

\$700,000 for us."

BMCC administrators will get a clearer idea of the budget hole after the forecast comes out around May 15.

See BMCC/10A

HERMISTON

Man found guilty of jealousy-fueled shooting

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Eduardo Rodriguez Barriga was found guilty Wednesday after shooting another man last August in a dispute over a woman.

The eleven jurors found Rodriguez, 26, guilty of second-degree assault and two counts of unlawful use of a weapon. His sentencing will take place Monday, May 8.

One juror fell ill before the trial concluded, but the decision was unanimous and the court accepted the verdict.

Rodriguez was arrested in Umatilla shortly after the shooting, which occurred August 24. He got into a dispute with Daniel Lemus

Carranza, 25, over a woman that Rodriguez had been dating. Rodriguez fired a gun and the bullet hit Lemus in the leg. After the shooting, Rodriguez drove off and Lemus tried to follow him in his own vehicle while calling 9-1-1. Dispatch told him to stop following the vehicle, and he parked at a convenience store where police and medics met up with him.



Rodriguez

Lemus was treated for a superficial gunshot wound to his leg.

At Wednesday's hearing, Rodriguez tried to convince jurors that he had acted in self-defense.

Rodriguez said that the morning of the incident he had met with the

See SHOOTING/10A

BOARDMAN

Utility plans may preclude Carty gas plant expansion

Negotiations to fill demand with existing resources

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

Portland General Electric may hold off on expanding the Carty Generating Station in Boardman if officials can instead acquire additional energy from other Northwest facilities — including existing hydro and thermal plants — to meet future demand.

PGE filed its most recent Integrated Resource Plan, or IRP, with the Oregon Public Utility Commission in November 2016. The plan calls for adding 561 megawatts of capacity by 2021, primarily due to the scheduled closure of the Boardman Coal Plant.

In order to hit that target, PGE has applied for site certificates to build two new units at the Carty natural gas plant, which also opened last

year. Environmental groups and tribal activists opposed the request, favoring wind and solar energy over increased fossil fuels.

Laurel Schmidt, a spokeswoman for PGE, said the permits to build at Carty are still pending, but the utility is considering alternatives and actively pursuing deals that could make up the energy shortfall from existing resources.

PGE did recently renew its commitment to the Wells Dam in Douglas County, maintaining 135 megawatts of capacity over the next 10 years. That agreement was signed with the Douglas County Public Utility District on March 29.

But after the Boardman Coal Plant closes, the utility will lose roughly 550 megawatts that needs to be recovered, along with an anticipated 1.2 percent load growth.

See CARTY/10A

