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Fritsch

PENDLETON

Fritsch picked as new superintendent

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The Pendleton School Board picked Chris Fritsch to be the district's next superintendent.

Fritsch, the assistant superintendent at Longview Public Schools, was one of four finalist candidates interviewed by the community, staff and school board this week. He will

begin the new job July 1, replacing interim superintendent Matt Yoshioka who began a two-month stint this week. Yoshioka is filling in after the early departure of Andy Kovach, who was hired in 2016 and resigned in February.

Debbie McBee, Pendleton School Board chair, said after interviews with "numerous" candidates and reference checks, the board found things they

liked about each candidate.

"However, Chris Fritsch emerged as the right fit for Pendleton," McBee said in a statement. "He demonstrated a superior breadth and depth of experience at all levels of district administration and was well received by all who interacted with him."

Fritsch was chosen over Jim Wagner, superintendent of Kimball Area Public Schools in Minnesota, J.T.

Stroder of Gardiner Public Schools in Montana and Aaron Chavez of the Wahluke School District in Washington.

McBee said in an interview that overall the crop of 21 candidates was much stronger than it was in 2016. The group included more candidates with superintendent experience,

See FRITSCH/12A

MISSION

CLINIC'S NUMBER IS ZERO

New Yellowhawk on path to net-zero energy consumption

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

The new Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center remains a work in progress as construction workers pound away toward a fall opening date.

Once completed, however, the building will have already taken its first steps toward net-zero energy consumption, thanks to a combination of efficiency and solar development.

Representatives of the Energy Trust of Oregon and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation donned hard hats for a tour of the site Friday, adjacent to the Nixyáawii Governance Center in Mission. Tribal leaders have worked closely with Energy Trust on the project to ensure it will one day create just as much energy as it consumes.

Yellowhawk is the first building from Eastern Oregon — and first tribal building statewide — to be enrolled in Energy Trust's "Path to Net-Zero" program. That means it was designed to operate at least 40 percent more efficiently than required by Oregon energy code.

Misti Nelmes, new buildings outreach manager for Energy Trust, said



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Representatives of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Energy Trust of Oregon tour the construction site for the new Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center on Friday in Mission.

Yellowhawk is already poised to exceed that target.

"It's really exciting to see," Nelmes said. "Basically, the goal was to focus on conservation first."

Nelmes led the way for much of the tour, speaking over the sound of whirring power tools and heavy

machinery inside the skeletal structure. She explained how the clinic will use LED lighting and controls, and how the heating and cooling system will use refrigerant in ceiling pipes to control temperature.

"It's very fine-tuned almost to the individual

needs of each room," Nelmes said.

Initial plans also call for Yellowhawk to build a solar carport capable of generating approximately 100 kilowatts of renewable energy. The tribes do plan to add more solar panels onto the building through

community fundraising.

Energy Trust of Oregon granted \$450,000 to the project in exchange for a net-zero energy commitment. Path to Net-Zero offers a range of incentives from early designs all the

See YELLOWHAWK/12A

Big fines dismissed in bighorn poaching

By AIMEE GREEN
The Oregonian/Oregonlive

Three men found responsible in the illegal beheadings of three bighorn sheep in rural Oregon won't have to pay \$25,000 each as penalties.

Judges in Gilliam and Wasco counties ruled this week that a state law meant to discourage poaching doesn't empower them to order the men to pay the penalties — even though prosecutors had argued that it did.

Justin Samora, 33, and Cody Plagmann, 37, were caught in April 2016 after a driver on Interstate 84 spotted one of them standing on a hillside over a dead bighorn sheep from a protected herd in the Columbia River Gorge in Gilliam County. Troopers found two black garbage bags — each with the head of a bighorn sheep in it — on the hillside.

The rulings also mark a victory for Jason Begay, 26, who was caught with a ram's head in his house in Wasco County in May 2016. He claimed that he found the animal already dead and decided to cut off its head and take it home. But that was enough to convict him — like Samora and Plagmann — of an illegal taking or possession of wildlife.

Since the three men were arrested last year, state lawmakers have raised the penalty for illegally killing or possessing the body parts of a bighorn sheep from \$25,000 to \$50,000. That's one of more than a dozen penalties that lawmakers have increased as of Jan. 1: State law now calls for poachers to pay \$7,500 for a cougar or a black bear; \$15,000 for an elk with six-point antlers and \$50,000 for a moose with antlers.

But defense attorneys for Samora, Plagmann and Begay argued that state law doesn't explicitly say a judge can order defendants to pay up in criminal court as restitution.

Prosecutors say that's precisely what the law was intended to do. In the past two months, judges in Linn

See POACHING/2A

MILTON-FREEWATER

Work begins on first new school since 1922

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

From a surprise opportunity to a successful bond campaign, Milton-Freewater was able to relive the happy set of circumstances that led to the groundbreaking of the city's first new school since 1922.

Standing on a temporary stage on Mill Street in front of a few dozen supporters Friday, Milton-Freewater Unified School District superintendent Rob Clark and other local and state officials marked the beginning of Gib Olinger Elementary School's construction with a ground breaking ceremony.

Clark remembered the day when the Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation informed him it was interested in contributing \$15 million to a new elementary school.

"It's like winning the Irish Sweepstake," he

See SCHOOL/12A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Children play with the golden shovels at a ground breaking ceremony for the new Gib Olinger Elementary School on Friday in Milton-Freewater.

Hermiston Office:
GLENN SCOTT
Veteran's Service Officer • 435 E Newport Ave.
Ph: 541.667.3125 • Cell: 541.848.8120
glenn.scott@umatillacounty.net

Pendleton Office:
JENNIFER OLSON
Veteran's Service Officer • 17 SW Frazer
Ph.541.278.5482
jennifer.olson@umatillacounty.net

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