

BOARDMAN

PGE suspends new gas power plants

By **TED SICKINGER**
By The Oregonian

Portland General Electric has suspended efforts to permit two new natural gas plants at a site in Boardman, saying it is in negotiations to potentially acquire existing resources instead.

The company had initiated the permitting process to be ready if the plants were selected as the least-cost, least-risk option in an upcoming competitive bidding process for new generating resources. The company originally forecast that it would need more than 800 average megawatts of new capacity resources by 2021, meaning power

plants that aren't weather dependent.

The permitting move prompted significant blowback from environmental groups, who don't want the utility to replace the coal-fired plant it plans to shut in 2020 with another fossil fuel resource that emits significant carbon dioxide.

Ratepayer advocates and independent power producers were also critical of the effort, saying PGE was looking to manipulate the competitive bidding process by giving a leg up to a self-build option that would favor its shareholders. They asked the company to look for other options rather than locking itself into another

30- to 40-year investment in new plants.

The company has since reduced its forecast of future needs by 71 megawatts, secured a 10-year contract for 135 megawatts of hydro-power, and executed contracts for another 52 megawatts of power with independent producers. Now the utility is in bilateral negotiations to acquire more capacity from existing resources.

"It's appropriate for us to suspend the permitting process at Carty until we complete these negotiations," said Jim Piro, PGE's chief executive.

PGE is required by state law to put its purchases of new power plants and

resources out for competitive bidding. If it can reach a deal, it will ask state regulators for permission to waive those requirements, though it may still need to solicit more resources to meet its projected needs.

PGE is still proposing to conduct a bidding process to acquire 175 average megawatts of new renewable resources.

"PGE has maintained an extensive dialogue with our regulators, customers and many stakeholder groups throughout our current resource planning process," Piro added. "We appreciate their input, and we're working hard to identify cost effective options."

HERMISTON

EOTEC progresses in year since event center opened

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

"It's kind of exciting to see our days fill up."

— **Heather Cannell**, EOTEC business manager

A lot has changed on the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center grounds since the project's first building opened one year ago.

Dozens of acres of dirt that once surrounded the event center are now a large grassy commons area, paths, lighting, three partially finished livestock barns and the foundation of a rodeo arena. The barns and arena are on track to be completed in time for the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo in August, according to contractors.

"We're moving forward," John Eckhardt of Knerr Construction told the EOTEC board Friday. "You can see a lot of progress on site."

Eckhardt said the bathroom footings were supposed to be poured later in the day, and the company also planned to erect the remaining steel for the largest barn on Friday.

Carl Hendon of Hendon Construction said they expected to get bleachers going up in the rodeo arena next week. He said the company could not have done it without the help of excellent subcontractors who have exceeded expectations, and board member Kim Puzey remarked that the quality of the concrete work was "stunning."

Mike Kay of the rodeo board thanked the contractors for their work, noting that when they came in the project was "quite frankly in a challenging spot" amid concerns that it would not be ready in time for the 2017 fair and rodeo.

"They took and merged everything together seamlessly," he said. "It would not have happened without these two companies, so thank you."

While construction is nearing completion, a question mark still remains about who will run the completed facility. The board had previously presented a plan to the Hermiston City Council and Umatilla County commissioners for a general manager supervising an administrative assistant and maintenance contract, but the project's two partners said they wanted to see more information about cost and salary comparisons with similar positions in the area before making a final decision. EOTEC board chair Byron Smith, who is also Hermiston's city manager, said he has scheduled a combined meeting with the board and commission for June 1 to go over that information.

Business manager Heather Cannell said she was seeing an increase in groups booking the event center for daytime meetings.

"It's kind of exciting to see our days fill up," she said.

On Friday the board also approved a marketing grant of \$2,000 from the tourism promotion assessment funds to the Hermiston Horse Sale Extravaganza. Randy Hull said he had been approached by Pendleton about moving the sale there, but he planned to move the event from the old fairgrounds up to EOTEC.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

BRIEFLY

Local high schools return from robotics world final

Two Umatilla County high school robotics teams have returned from the FIRST Robotics Competition World Finals in Houston with some valuable experience and memories.

In its sixth year with a robotics program, Umatilla High School took 48 members of the Confidential team to Texas, according to a press release from the InterMountain Education Service District.

Confidential and its robot, Dewey, performed well enough that they were able to advance to the "World Level" for the first time in school history, joining an alliance of teams from Georgia, California and Israel.

Although Confidential bowed out during the quarterfinal round, students were grateful for their time at the finals.

"Going to Houston was so exciting, it's an experience that I wouldn't miss for the world," Umatilla junior Madison Finck said.

Pendleton High School took their first trip to finals, sending six members from the Modern Americans team and their robot, BillyBot.

Being rookies at the competition, Pendleton received help throughout the competition from Umatilla in the form of equipment transportation and robot troubleshooting.

Despite some help from another team from the Northwest, Circuit Breakers, Modern Americans were not able to make it past the qualifying rounds, although it didn't dampen their pride.

"The magnitude of the friendly competition was enormous!" PHS freshman Landon Thornburg said.

Both teams also received



Photo courtesy of the Umatilla School District

The Confidential robotics team from Umatilla High School attended the FIRST Robotics Competition World Finals in Houston in April.

guided tours at NASA's Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, producing another learning opportunity.

Jimenez pleads not guilty to shooting crime

PENDLETON — Cesar Corcuera Jimenez, 26, of Hermiston pleaded not guilty Tuesday to trying to kill a man last week in Morrow County.

The district attorney's office on Tuesday arraigned Jimenez on the following charges based on a grand jury indictment: attempt to commit murder; first-degree assault; felon in possession of a firearm; unlawful use of a weapon; menacing; and pointing a firearm at another.

The state accused Jimenez of shooting and injuring Robert Aguilera with a .22-caliber rifle on April 29.

Hermiston police chief Jason Edmiston stated Jimenez "is responsible for a rash of criminal activity that took place" that weekend.

Circuit court records show Jimenez has several previous criminal cases, including a 2012 conviction in Umatilla County for second-degree assault. He also has a case pending in Umatilla County

stemming from an assault in January. He has pleaded not guilty in that case to charges of possession of methamphetamine, unlawful use of a weapon, fourth-degree assault and felon in possession of a restricted weapon — a stun gun.

His next hearing in the attempted murder case is May 18. Jimenez remains in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton.

DA drops Flores sex crimes case

HERMISTON — Elias Nava Flores, 24, of Hermiston no longer faces any

sex crimes charges.

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office arrested Flores May 2 on charges of first-degree rape, first-degree sodomy and possession of methamphetamine.

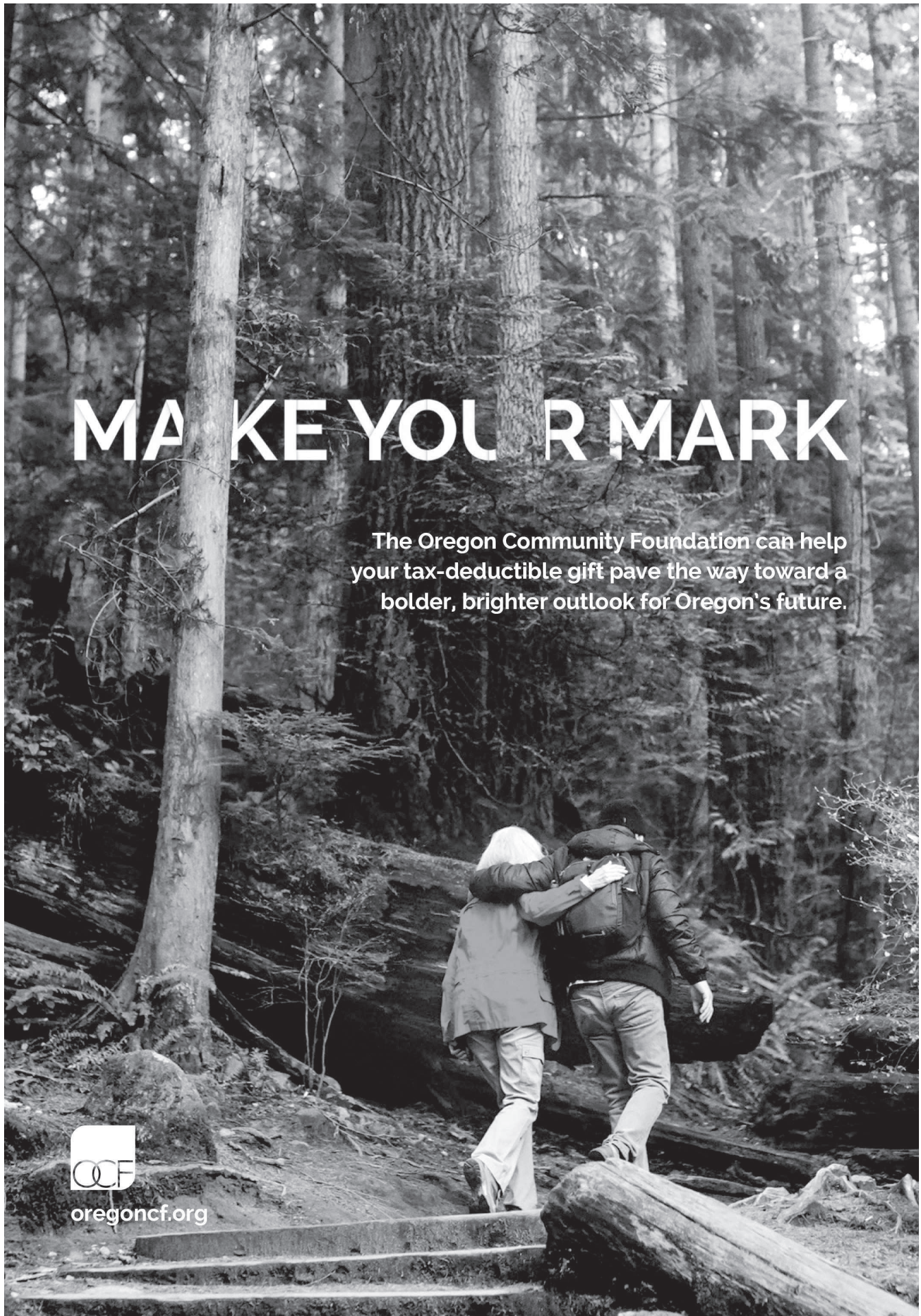
The sheriff's office in a written statement claimed the victim was younger than 12, and the victim's relative told police about inappropriate sexual contact between Flores and the victim.

The district attorney's office on May 3 arraigned Flores on a single charge of first-degree rape. But one week later, deputy district attorney Jaelyn Jenkins filed a motion to dismiss the case citing two reasons: the state cannot prove the crimes beyond a reasonable doubt and it is in the best interests of justice.

Circuit Court Judge Dan Hill granted the dismissal the same day.

Flores still faced the meth charge, and he remains in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, on a warrant related to another case.

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