

EOTEC: Fair and rodeo grounds set to be completed in July

Continued from 1A

the center exceeded revenue projections.

Smith said those numbers only included salary, not benefits, but EOTEC is not a PERS employer and does not offer health insurance so benefit costs are low.

City councilor John Kirwan said he liked the idea of basing a part of the general manager's salary on a commission or bonus system tied to how much revenue EOTEC makes each year. Other councilors and commissioners agreed.

Smith said it would be tricky to find the right formula between base salary and incentive, but it was something the EOTEC board could come up with.

Mayor David Drotzmann said he was concerned it would be difficult to recruit

a quality manager without offering health insurance as a benefit. Smith said he had already begun looking into if it was possible to add the manager to the city's health insurance or find another reasonable option.

During the public comment section prior to Smith's presentation, several neighbors testified they were still seeing problems generated by EOTEC in their neighborhood.

Richard Meisner questioned the city's decision to lease water rights from a Stanfield Irrigation customer and said he was concerned it would negatively affect neighbors' ability to get the irrigation water they needed. Other neighbors brought up the thumping bass noise they said they can hear until midnight during events, and that people often leave the

event driving recklessly.

"People coming from these facilities are drinking and driving, no doubt in my mind," Chris Waine said.

Commissioner Bill Elfering said he would discuss the need for extra patrols after events with Sheriff Terry Rowan, who was present at the meeting, and EOTEC business manager Heather Cannell said she would begin sending event information to the sheriff's office so they would know when large parties were finishing up at EOTEC.

The meeting ended with a tour of the fair and rodeo grounds, which are nearing the home stretch of construction with a goal of being completed in July.

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DAIRY: Will likely build up its herd to 30,000 cows over the next three years

Continued from 1A

mental Quality to take a closer look at Lost Valley Farm and either tighten protections or reject the dairy outright.

Members of the coalition include the Animal Legal Defense Fund, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Food Safety, Columbia Riverkeeper, Food & Water Watch, Friends of Family Farmers, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Humane Oregon and Oregon Rural Action.

Lost Valley Farm received its confined animal feeding operation permit on March 31. At the time, ODA and DEQ claimed they had crafted "the most protective of any (CAFO) permit issued to date," requiring 11 groundwater monitoring wells on site — seven more than usual — and a minimum of three annual inspections, versus one every 10 months.

The permit became effective on April 20, and a spokeswoman for Lost Valley said the dairy is now up and running at the former Boardman Tree Farm. There are currently 16,000 animals at the farm, with about 8,700 being milking cows.

Regulators anticipate Lost Valley will build up its herd to a full 30,000 cows over the next three years, making it the second-largest dairy in Oregon. Only Threemile Canyon Farms is larger, with 70,000 head of cattle just 25 miles away in Morrow County.

Part of the CAFO permit outlines how Lost Valley will manage an estimated 187 million gallons of wastewater and manure produced each year. And though the agencies

responded to 4,200 public comments about the project, opponents remain deeply concerned about potential contamination of surface water and groundwater.

"This mega-dairy threatens to spew mega pollution, creating an environmental nightmare for the people and wildlife unlucky enough to share the landscape," said Hannah Connor, senior attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity.

Lost Valley Farm is located within the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area, which was designated in 1990 due to elevated levels of groundwater nitrates. Opponents say adding another large dairy in the area poses significant health risks from further groundwater contamination.

None of the petitioners have had the chance to review Lost Valley's revised Animal Waste Management Plan, according to the petition, which lays out how the dairy will collect wastewater and use it to irrigate feed crops. Connor said the groups also want to see a plan that takes into account not only nitrogen and phosphorous from manure, but harmful antibiotic residue and pesticides.

"We really believe the agencies have some significant changes they can make here," Connor said.

ODA and DEQ have 60 days to reply to the petition, or the groups say they will likely file an appeal. Connor said there is no indication yet their concerns will be fixed.

Wym Matthews, CAFO program manager for the Department of Agriculture, could not be reached

Thursday for comment.

Greg te Velde, owner of Lost Valley Farm, defended the operation's management practices and said he is confident the coalition's challenge is without merit. Te Velde has been milking cows in the area since 2002, having previously established Willow Creek Dairy on land leased from Threemile Canyon Farms.

"We have worked in Oregon for over 15 years, and have consistently met the state's high standards," te Velde said. "Our operation at Lost Valley Farm includes protection for water quality that go further than any other dairy authorized by Oregon's CAFO program, and has been closely vetted by state regulators."

Tarah Heinzen, staff attorney for Food & Water Watch, described the petition for reconsideration as one step below a formal appeal of the CAFO permit. The petition also asks agencies to stay Lost Valley's permit, though Heinzen admits that is unlikely to happen.

While Heinzen said the permitting agencies did make some improvements between the draft and final permit for Lost Valley it falls well short of what is required to protect waterways. Approval of Lost Valley could also set a dangerous precedent for Oregon dairies moving forward, she added.

"We think this is a very important test case for the state to take a very close look at the potential environmental impacts of a facility this size," Heinzen said.

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TONYA'S HOUSE: Took in girls 13-18

Continued from 1A

The last resident of Tonya's House left May 16. White-Zollman said the Oregon Department of Human Services worked to find the girl a foster home.

The nonprofit employed five full- and part-time staff, including Shawn MacGregor, who came from northern Minnesota in April 2016 as the new director. White-Zollman said the staff stayed to help close the home at 328 S.W. Court Ave. Their last day was Wednesday.

ElRae Wells of Pendleton founded Tonya's House in 1997. Back then she worked at Pendleton High School with special needs students and recalled stories about teen girls who needed a place to stay during tough circumstances ranging from drug-addicted parents to a single mother dying of cancer.

"Students can't learn if they worry about where they're going to live, what they're going to eat," Wells said. "They can't learn if they have those worries. They need a safe place to stay."

Tonya's house did not emerge from a vacuum, she said, but from the community, which gave the nonprofit money to buy a home in 1998 and then sweat, gifts and more funds to allow it to open about three years later.

"When we were working on it, we thought if this helps one girl, if it makes a difference in one girl's life, then we've done something really good," she said.

White-Zollman and Wells said as far as they knew, Tonya's House was the only nonprofit of its kind in Eastern Oregon. Wells said before Tonya's House, girls stayed with friends if they were lucky or compromised themselves just to sleep under a roof. She called Tonya's House "God's gift to Pendleton" and said the goal was to "do a good enough job with these girls that their daughters didn't have to knock on our door."

Tonya's House went on to provide girls with more than 2,800 nights of housing, according to information from the nonprofit.

White-Zollman said Tonya's House took in girls 13-18, and some suffered from addictions and mental health problems. Girls came when they were borderline suicidal. Sometimes they arrived with nothing more than the clothes they had on.

Wells said that's why the closing is so troubling. Girls are out there in Eastern Oregon who need Tonya's House — but there is no longer a Tonya's House.

"It's a real loss," she said. White-Zollman said

while there are foster homes and mental health organizations, the need for Tonya's House continues even as the nonprofit can no longer afford to operate. She said the board's sincere hope is another organization can step into the role.

Wells said she also is concerned about the small endowment she and her husband, Pete Wells, gave to Tonya's House years ago. She said the idea was to build that to a point the interest from the money could cover day-to-day costs.

White-Zollman said she did not know about an endowment, but the board hired the Pendleton firm of Corey Byler Rew Lorenzen Hojem to handle the legal end of bringing an end to a nonprofit. Part of that entails donating all of the assets to another charitable nonprofit, she said, and in this case the board voted to give assets from Tonya's House to Pioneer Relief Nursery of Pendleton, which helps at-risk infants, toddlers and families.

The donation includes the house itself, White-Zollman said, and Pioneer Relief Nursery will determine what to do with it.

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TRANSPORTATION: Bill still open to public hearings and amendments

Continued from 1A

biking, while people are riding Walmart bicycles around town that cost less than \$500 but put just as much wear and tear on the street.

"You're working on the small guy but letting the big guy go," he said. "... If you're going to do that, do it to everyone."

He called the tax "kind of a bummer" for his business and said he felt the benefits of increased bicycle lanes would mostly go to the metro area.

The largest projects listed in the bill are located in Portland and surrounding metro areas, including projects worth hundreds of millions of dollars designed to widen Interstate 5, Interstate 205 and Highway 217. But Portland residents will also be paying more, via additional fuel taxes and new tolls at the Washington state line on Interstate 5 and Interstate 205.

Revenue

The upside of raising more money, of course, is that there will be more money to spend. Cities and counties will see extra gas tax money in the millions of dollars over the 10 years for road, bridge and culvert improvements.

The legislature is also setting aside money for specific projects in each of ODOT's regions. Region 5, which covers most of Eastern Oregon, will receive \$23.9 million, and there will be another \$10 million set aside for joint projects between Region 5 and Region 4. That list covers things like \$3 million to the city of Milton-Freewater for "pedestrian and highway improvements."

City Manager Linda Hall said the city doesn't have any actual highways, but does have "roads wide enough to be a highway that are certainly showing wear and tear," especially after the harsh winter.

"Streets that we thought would be OK for another five to 10 years are not OK

anymore," she said.

Hall also said that the city could also use the money to add sidewalks to areas where children are currently walking to school along the side of a busy road.

She said Milton-Freewater is an example of a "small city with limited resources" that could really be helped by the transportation package to do projects that would not otherwise be possible.

Projects

The following projects in Umatilla County and Morrow County are also listed in the bill:

- The city of Hermiston would receive funds to widen and improve North First Place and add traffic signals to the road's intersections with Highland Avenue and Orchard Avenue.

- The Port of Umatilla would receive funds for a road project that General Manager Kim Puzey said will allow the port to "improve access to Columbia River import and export terminals, most especially the movement of bulk commodities such as grain and fuel products."

- The Columbia Development Authority would receive funds for improving access from Interstate 82 into the former Umatilla Chemical Depot, which the authority is planning to open to industrial development after the depot is transferred from the Army to the CDA. The Oregon Military Department would also receive funds for improving the rail system on its section of the depot.

- Umatilla County would receive funds to pave and improve Ott Road and East Airport Road to provide better access to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

- Heppner would receive \$3 million for various needed pedestrian and highway improvements.

- The Port of Morrow would receive funds for the East Beach Industrial Park rail expansion.

- Morrow County would

receive an extra \$108,073 for road maintenance each year.

Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, sits on the Joint Committee for Transportation Preservation and Modernization and a variety of other committees, including as a co-vice chair of Ways and Means.

He said District 57, including Umatilla County and Morrow County, did "really well" in comparison with other rural areas on the amount of dollars coming in for projects. He said it may seem unfair to some other cities and counties, but when it comes to funding there is a pendulum that swings toward different districts during different sessions.

"There are times that legislators find themselves in positions to help their districts, and this is our time," he said.

Smith also said that projects that clear up congestion in the Portland area benefit Eastern Oregon by allowing farmers and others to move their commodities across the state faster.

The projects listed in House Bill 2017 are not a done deal. The bill will be the subject of public hearings on June 6-7 and is still open to amendments before being passed on to the legislature for a vote. And while the committee is optimistic that enough votes can be found in the House and the Senate to pass the bill, the legislature was on its way to passing a similar package in 2015 when negotiations fell apart over disagreements on the state's low-carbon fuels standard.

Even if the governor signs the bill, a provision inside states that if voters challenge and repeal any part of its revenue-raising provisions, the entire bill will be repealed so that the state doesn't end up committed to paying for projects it hasn't raised the money for.

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