

PENDLETON

Mayor hands city critic an ultimatum

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

Grumbling about a letter to the editor published in the *East Oregonian* is not uncommon for the Pendleton City Council, but it isn't usually followed by an ultimatum.

At a Tuesday city council meeting, Mayor John Turner used the public comment section to deliver a rebuke of Rick Rohde's letters to the editor where he criticized the city for directing money toward projects helmed by friends.

Turner seemed to take issue with Rohde's characterization of the council, summoning him back to the podium after he complained about unkempt lots near McDonald's.

Rohde is a regular critic of the city on the *East Oregonian* opinion page and at council meetings, and ran an unsuccessful campaign for a seat on the city council in May 2016.

Turner said: "I'd like to talk to you about two occasions over the past several months you've written letters to the *EO* making allegations of criminal misconduct against the city council. On the twentieth of April, you wrote that, 'The city council continues to fund private projects that benefit a few people within their circle of friends.' That's an allegation of fraud or corruption. Then, just a few days ago, on the seventh of June, you wrote another letter, saying 'city officials continued to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on projects that benefit a few friends and very little that benefit everyone.' So those are allegations of corruption that you're making in writing to the public. So I'd like to ask you at this point to produce your evidence of what's behind those allegations. What are you using for evidence?"

"Just what I see that's happening with the Rivoli (Theater)," Rohde responded.

Turner continued: "I'm going to tell you that there are limits to free speech. Lacking evidence and misusing your own personal opinion, you cross a very bright and clear line between freedom of speech and defamation of character and perhaps even libel. Lacking specific evidence, your conduct is morally and ethically irresponsible. It's probably illegal. ... But if you present evidence, I'll guarantee you that I will personally take it to the district attorney for further investigation. If you don't really have any evidence, and I suspect you don't, then I'd like you to do the honorable thing and print a retraction. If you choose to do neither one of those, I'm going to guarantee you that I will continue to remind you and this council of your dishonest, disingenuous and dishonorable conduct of every meeting I chair."

"Good for you," Rohde responded before returning to his seat.

On Thursday, Rohde provided a more full-bodied response in the format that earned Turner's ire in the first place: a letter to the editor, which is published on Page 4A of today's paper. Rohde did not return multiple requests for comment or clarification.

Rohde's original letters to the editor follow sizable grants the Pendleton Development Commission, which is comprised of the city council, made to local nonprofits.

The commission gave the Pendleton Downtown Association \$55,000 in April to hire an executive director and cover a year's worth of operating expenses.

In May, the commission gave \$96,000 to the Rivoli Restoration Coalition for the Rivoli Theater redevelopment project's first phase of construction. The funding is contingent on the coalition raising the rest of the \$560,000 for Phase 1.



Turner



Rohde

BRIEFLY

Woman injured in Washington wreck

ATHENA — Washington State Patrol reported an Athena woman crashed Wednesday into an oncoming vehicle, injuring herself and four others.

Judy McCulloch, 72, of Athena, around 3:30 p.m. was driving a 2005 Chevrolet Classic westbound on Highway 12 about a mile from Clarkston City, according to the state patrol, when she made a left turn in front of an eastbound 2013 Toyota Venza. The Toyota hit the Chevrolet.

Four occupants in the Toyota — all from Orofino, Idaho — and McCulloch were taken to St. Joseph Medical Center. There was no information about their conditions.

Washington State Patrol reported McCulloch faces a citation for failure to yield the right of way.

Fire tower groundbreaking is next Thursday

HERMISTON — Groundbreaking on a new tower that will provide hands-on training to fire science students will take place next Thursday.

The public is invited to the groundbreaking ceremony at 2 p.m. on July 29 at Umatilla County Fire District 1's Station 23 at 78760 Westland Road outside of Hermiston.

About 47 percent of the funding for the tower comes from Blue Mountain Community College's bond issue, while the rest will be covered by the fire district.

The tower will benefit all of BMCC's fire science students by providing hands-on experience with fire suppression, search and

rescue, rappelling and ventilation. The college offers an Associate of Applied Science degree in Fire Science Technology and other certifications for potential and current firefighters.

Athena library builds up summer reading program

ATHENA — Youths in kindergarten through age 14 are invited to participate in the summer reading program at the Athena Public Library.

With a theme of "Build a Better Community," the activities include a massive Lego project, which kicks off Monday, June 26 at 10 a.m. at the library, 418 E. Main St., Athena. In addition, the Wednesday evening program (adults must accompany kids) is at 6:30 p.m.

Children are invited to bring their own Lego bricks, Kevax, Duplos or other wooden/plastic blocks to create something fabulous, awesome, quirky, enormous or miniature with no tools except the blocks. Children not interested in building can learn embroidery stitches with Brenda or play with the Pokemon Club.

Also, the Athena Public Library board open house is Wednesday, June 28 from 5-7 p.m. The library is celebrating its ninth birthday in the new building. Cookies and punch will be served.

The library director is seeking family histories and old photos of the Athena area, especially pictures of buildings that are no longer standing or earlier photos of buildings that are still in existence.

For more information, contact 541-566-2470 or athenalibrary@cityofathena.com.

Roadkill clear for harvest, consumption

By **ANDREW SELSKY**
Associated Press

SALEM — Some folks in Oregon might not want to ask, when served an elk burger or a venison steak, where the meat came from.

Under a roadkill bill passed overwhelmingly by the Legislature and signed by the governor, motorists who crash into the animals can now harvest the meat to eat.

It's not as unusual as people might think. About 20 other states also allow people to take meat from animals killed by vehicles. Aficionados say roadkill can be high-quality, grass-fed grub.

"Eating roadkill is healthier for the consumer than meat laden with antibiotics, hormones and growth stimulants, as most meat is today," noted People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or PETA.

Washington state began allowing the salvaging of deer and elk carcasses a year ago. Pennsylvania might top the country in road kills, with Oregon wildlife officials telling lawmakers that the eastern state had over 126,000 vehicle-wildlife accidents in 2015.

"We are at or near the top of the list. We have a lot of roads and a lot of deer," said Travis Lau, spokesman for the Pennsylvania Game Commission, though he added the total number was uncertain.

Pennsylvanians can take deer or turkeys that are killed on the road if they report the incidents to the commission



In this 2008 file photo, a wounded deer lies in the road after being hit by a car on the northbound lane of Interstate 295 near Freeport, Maine. In Oregon, under a road kill bill passed overwhelmingly by the Legislature and signed by the governor, motorists who crash into the animals can now harvest the meat for human consumption.

within 24 hours, Lau said in a telephone interview.

Gov. Kate Brown signed Oregon's bill last week after the Senate and House passed it without a single "nay" vote.

But a few Oregonians voiced opposition. Kirkpatrick-Pilger, a Republican Party official in mountainous, forested Josephine County, told legislators that people have been salvaging roadkill meat in Oregon for years — since vehicles and animals have been colliding — and they've never needed a law or permit to do it.

Actually, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife said that before last week, the only people allowed to keep roadkill

were licensed furtakers, and no one — not even licensed hunters — could keep game animals found as roadkill.

The rules were aimed at discouraging people from hitting a game animal with their vehicle to take the meat or antlers. "It's not a legal method of hunting," the department's website says.

Les Helgeson, of the community of Beaver, near the northwest coast, told legislators that roadkill "would not be palatable, much less pass any sense of health standards for human consumption."

But those who have sampled it say otherwise.

Todd Toven of Castle Rock, Colorado, posted a video on YouTube showing himself carving up a deer

that had been hit by a vehicle on a highway and finished off by a deputy sheriff's bullet. Toven made it into venison sausage.

"A lot of people who don't hunt hear the word 'roadkill' and they get turned off," Toven said. "We're talking perfectly clean, cold meat."

Oregon's new law calls for the state Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt rules for the issuance of permits for the purpose of salvaging meat for human consumption from deer or elk that have been accidentally killed in a vehicle collision.

The first permits are to be issued no later than Jan. 1, 2019. The antlers must be handed over to the state's wildlife agency.

Health department redirecting insured patients

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

The Umatilla County Public Health Department is trying to push away patients who have insurance to make room for those who don't.

James Setzer, the county health administrator, said public health does it differently than for-profit providers.

"Financially we are sending away the 'good' patients, yes indeed," he said, but the effort is to help those who need it more.

Oregon counties are under a state mandate to modernize public health, Setzer explained, and part of that includes moving away from having a nurse or other staffer interact directly with the patient. To that end, he said county health staff have been counseling female patients receiving family planning and reproductive health

services to see if they have insurance and could use it with a local primary care provider.

Setzer said in terms of public health, it makes sense to have patients receive their care from their primary provider, and reducing the number of people the county sees eases the strain on the limited public budget. County health saw 211 patients for family planning in April and May, according to figures from the department, and 109 had insurance while 102 did not.

"We're making sure the resources are there for the people who have no options," Setzer said. "If they have options and are using up the subsidy, there is less for people without the options."

Most patients have been understanding, he said, but he knows some are concerned about what this means to people who need the free or low-cost services

the county provides. The department, he said, is the only provider in the county for the Oregon Contraceptive Care program and the federal Title X Family Planning Program, and that is not changing.

"We're not taking anything away," Setzer stressed. "We're looking at all the options to make sure people get the services they need."

For example, Setzer said the Mirasol Family Health Center, Hermiston, is taking up some referrals from the county. And he is kicking the tires on the possibility of contracting out direct patient care — something Washington and Douglas counties in western Oregon do. But he cautioned that may work for counties with more resources may not translate in rural counties, including Umatilla, where resources and health care providers can be scarce.

Public health, like most

other county departments, had to trim where it could and reorganize for the budget that goes into effect July 1. On paper, the department cut positions from about 31 full time to almost 21 full time and its funding dropped by more than \$200,000, to less than \$3.7 million.

Robert Pahl, the county's chief fiscal officer, said the reality is not as harsh. The county moved the \$650,000 school-based Community Access for Resource Effectiveness and its five full-time jobs from public health to human services. And some grant-funded programs ran their course and were eliminated.

Setzer said the budget's tight, but it's always going to be tight, and Umatilla County Public Health still has a job to do.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

Free cultural event to follow Hermiston Funfest

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Food and dancing from around the world will be on display in downtown Hermiston on July 8.

Various cultural groups from the community are gathering after Funfest from 4-7:30 p.m. to present a free family event with entertainment and cuisine that takes participants "around the world in one fun day."

One of the event's main sponsors is the Hermiston Cultural Awareness Club, which until recently was known as the Black International Awareness Club. Vice president Jody Frost said in the past the club has been more focused on providing

the community with an annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day event, but they changed the name of the club in recognition of a desire to spend more time celebrating a wider array of cultures.

Around the World in One Fun Day is a manifestation of that. Frost said club member Jesus Rome has been wanting to put on such an event for a couple of years, and the group decided now was the time. They met with members of the Hispanic Advisory Committee and unofficial representatives of the area's other cultural communities, including Filipino, Samoan, Nepalese, Hawaiian, American Indian and Russian (the Scottish will be busy with

the Athena Caledonian Games that weekend) to plan something that would help showcase participants' heritage.

"I was kind of surprised," Frost said. "The other groups, I didn't really know them before we sat around the table together, but we have a lot of different cultures in Hermiston."

She said they hope the event on July 8 communicates that to the rest of Hermiston as well.

"People might not be aware of the different cultures that are in our community," she said.

Frost said the Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce was gracious enough to let the group use the stage that will be set up earlier in the day on Main Street to accommodate performers at the Hermiston Funfest. Each group at Around the World in One Fun Day will have 20 to 30 minutes to present dances or information about their culture, plus an opportunity to showcase food and other items in booths.

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

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