

HERMISTON



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Where's it coming from?

Water flows from a storm drain at the corner of West Division Avenue and Southwest Seventh Street in Hermiston. The water, which has been flowing steadily out of the drain for about five days, has been traveling two blocks down Seventh Street to another drain on Highland Avenue. The city of Hermiston's water department has determined it is not coming from a problem with the city's water system and has referred the problem to the street department to continue investigating its source.

Phone scams pose as power company

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Phone scammers pretending to be from Pacific Power tried to bilk \$1,500 from the Stanfield Moose Lodge.

But Leland Winebarger, junior governor of Lodge 920, said he double-checked with the power company and did not pay a dime. He said he wants to make sure others also know about the scam.

The lodge got a call from a man who claimed to be with Pacific Power and threatened to shut down electricity to the lodge for failing to pay metering fees, Winebarger said, and that was the first he ever heard of the fee.

The caller said crews were in the area and ready to kill the juice at the flip of a switch, Winebarger said, unless the lodge paid \$1,500. Winebarger said he talked that down to \$500, and the caller said to pay the fees through money cards from a local retailer.

"Doesn't this seem like scam to you, that's what I kept telling them," Wine-

barger said.

He was right, of course. But the fake company man sounded convincing, Winebarger said, and insisted this was on the up-and-up. Winebarger said he decided to call Pacific Power first.

He said the company representative told him it was a scam and there was no metering fee.

The scammers called back, Winebarger said, and the number on the caller identification was the same as Pacific Power's. The swindler even gave the same first name as the real company representative.

The circumstances prompted Winebarger to again call Pacific Power, where a representative confirmed con artists are able to "mirror" the company's phone number.

Pacific Power spokesman Tom Gauntt said these scams often go after businesses and tend to come in small clusters in an area. Pacific Power does not charge a metering fee, nor would it try to collect past due amounts over the phone with a threat, Gauntt said.

Winebarger tried to

call Stanfield police and reached out to his friend Jason Edmiston, chief of Hermiston police. Edmiston said he knew about the scam — the very same fraud last year cheated a Hermiston business out of about \$1,200.

Edmiston said the con artists are savvy, and they may have even called Pacific Power just to talk to a company rep and get their name. And with summer in full swing and electricity in high need for air conditioning, Edmiston said he also worried about fraudsters going after the elderly in the community.

Gauntt said anyone who has a call from the company and thinks something doesn't sound right should hang up and call Pacific Power's customer service number at 1-888-221-7070.

He said no Pacific Power employee would argue with a customer for doing that, and company reps would be able to work out any actual account problems.

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

PENDLETON

Crash ends chase within seconds

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Maurice Videll Bronson, 32, of Pendleton, faces several charges after crashing into another car.

Pendleton police Lt. Chuck Byram said an officer at about 6:30 p.m. Tuesday was monitoring the four-way stop at Southeast Eighth Street and Byers Avenue when a car drove right through the stop sign on Byers and headed for downtown.

The officer turned on his car's police lights and started to pursue when the vehicle turned left onto Southeast Sixth Street. Seconds later, Byram said, the car crashed into a westbound vehicle on Southeast Court Avenue.

Bronson got out of the wreck and tried to walk away from police "so she had to be handcuffed," Byram said.

The victim in the collision was not injured, he said, but Bronson suffered a minor injury to her arm. An ambulance took her to



Staff photo by Tim Trainor

Pendleton police were pursuing a vehicle about 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, when the driver crashed into another vehicle at the intersection of Southeast Sixth and Southeast Court in Pendleton.

St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, where staff treated and released her.

From there, the lieutenant said police took Bronson to the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, on charges of felony attempt to flee police and misdemeanors of property hit and run, reckless driving, reckless endangering and interfering with a peace officer. Byram estimated

Bronson was going about 30 mph and blew through stop signs before the crash. Her reckless driving started before an officer saw her, he said, and the "pursuit" was barely underway before the crash.

Umatilla County Circuit Court records show Bronson has a criminal history, and her last conviction was in 2013 in Umatilla County for possession of methamphetamine.

Lifetime senior passes to national parks set to jump 800 percent

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

U.S. National Parks will soon charge increase the price of a lifetime senior pass, but a few local facilities will offer passes at the original price of \$10 until August 25, three days before the fee increases.

Congress decided in December 2016 to raise the price of the America the Beautiful — National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Senior Pass from \$10 to \$80, which will take effect August 28 of this year.

The pass, available to people aged 62 and older, allows seniors to enter national parks and sites managed by other federal

agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Land Management.

In addition to the change, seniors will now be able to purchase an annual pass for \$20, and turn in four expired annual passes for a lifetime pass.

Many national park sites remain free, but for those that charge for entry, the pass will continue to admit the senior holding the pass, as well as any traveling companions.

Although new passes will increase in cost from \$10 to \$80, current lifetime passes will remain valid.

Passes are available at any federal recreation site. Denise McInturff of

McNary National Wildlife Refuge said their facility has been trying to get more passes in case people want to purchase them before the price changes.

"We've definitely seen a spike," she said. McInturff said.

While the McNary refuge is free to the public, McInturff said there are several facilities within the area that charge, at which the senior passes would be valid.

She said she didn't think the price increase would be a deterrent for visitors.

"Seniors can still purchase yearly passes for \$20," she said. "Free entry, tours, discounts. I don't see the price increase as having a major impact."

PENDLETON
City staff may hire fire station contractor before finalizing design

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The Pendleton City Council is nearing some important decisions as it hones in on building the fire station central to the \$10 million bond voters passed in May.

At a workshop Tuesday, Pendleton Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo said he would have two requests at the next council meeting — approving a contract for architectural design work with the Mackenzie group and an alternative method of bidding out construction services.

Ciraulo said staff told him this alternative method could deliver a cheaper project. After design services are completed, the city would typically award the project to the lowest bidder.

City staff is instead suggesting the city undertake a method called construction manager/general contractor project delivery.

In an interview after the meeting, Ciraulo said the city would still send out a request for proposal to find a contractor, but the contractor would get involved in the project during the design process rather than after it.

The selected contractor would provide input to Mackenzie during the design phase and identify areas where there could be cost savings.

The contractor would submit a "guaranteed maximum price" of the construction costs toward the end of the design phase and begin hiring subcontractors for things like electrical

work and heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

Ciraulo said this method could save the city money in the long run by preventing high bids and change orders.

During the construction process, "change orders kill you," Ciraulo said.

Regardless of how its done, the city will have to make the construction and design costs fit into the \$9.4 million budget for the fire station.

Early in the process, the city has already been able to save a little money.

Ciraulo told the council that the independent appraisal to acquire the future fire station's Southeast Court Avenue property from St. Anthony Hospital was \$360,000 — \$25,000 lower than the city projected.

According to Mackenzie, fire station construction will begin in August 2018 and finish in September 2019.

Public Works Director Bob Patterson will also approach the city council with a request to hire an engineering firm.

The council will consider hiring Anderson Perry & Associates for \$503,000 to gather data for its streets and stormwater systems and help craft a street utility master plan, among other services.

Adding data about the city's street and drainage infrastructure to its geographic information system will help the city determine how it will pay to maintain those utilities.

After Anderson Perry conducts evaluation on the city's impervious and non-impervious surfaces on commercial and industrial

territory, the city could implement a stormwater utility fee to pay for the drainage system's needs.

City Manager Robb Corbett explained the need to raise more revenue for the stormwater system.

"I don't know how many 100-year storms we've had in the five years that I've been here, but it's been several," he said. "Every time that happens, we get phone calls from people at key locations around the city where there's recurring flooding issues because this stormwater system was designed for an environment that is different today. We don't have the resources to be able to repair that and we don't have resources identified to maintain it."

The street utility master plan would be an update to a 2013 study that showed Pendleton had a \$16 million road maintenance backlog.

Corbett said the city could take out a loan to wipe away the backlog.

Patterson said the prospect of using a loan to address deferred maintenance while putting a hold on ongoing maintenance "scares the crap out of me." "I don't know if we would have any money to address the road maintenance if we were to bond the work," Corbett responded. "But I do know that we are losing roads faster than we're fixing them. Both of (those prospects) scare the crap out of me, but it's just a matter if you want to deal with it now or deal with it over time."

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

BRIEFLY

Landowner blows whistle on plumeless thistle

HEPPNER — A new invasive weed has been spotted for the first time growing in southern Morrow County.

Plumeless thistle, which has previously been identified in neighboring Grant County and a few locations in Wallowa County, was recently found by a landowner while out spraying for other types of thistle in the area.

While it may look similar to Scotch thistle or musk thistle — with their distinctive rose-colored flowers — plumeless thistle is distinct from its fellow invasive brethren. The weed can grow more than 4 feet tall, with spiny leaves measuring 4-8 inches long.

Blooms usually occur between May and July, and each plant can produce up to 1,000 seeds.

Once established, plumeless thistle can degrade pasture land by crowding out more desirable forage, making it all but impossible to graze cattle.

Landowners who suspect they may have plumeless thistle on their property should call the Morrow County weed control office at 541-989-9500. Early detection and rapid response is key to controlling the weed before it can become widespread.



Photo contributed by Dave Pranger

Plumeless thistle, a state-listed noxious weed, was recently found in southern Morrow County.

Civic four-door westbound in the fast lane, according to state police, and lost control of the car. The Honda crossed the slow lane and left the road, coming to rest against a dirt and rock embankment.

The crash ejected Burns, state police reported. Emergency personnel tried to save her life, but she succumbed to her injuries.

Police also reported an infant in a properly secured child safety seat was in the car. An ambulance took the child to Mid-Columbia Medical Center, The Dalles, for evaluations of minor injuries.

The Gilliam County Sheriff's Office, Gilliam County Emergency Services and others assisted at the scene.

Gresham woman dies in Eastern Oregon crash

PHILIPPI CANYON — A 22-year-old Gresham woman died Tuesday in a highway crash in Gilliam County.

Oregon State Police reported troopers from The Dalles Area Command at about 3:30 p.m. responded to the single-vehicle crash on I-84 near milepost 118, about five miles west of the exit for Philippi Canyon.

Effie P. Burns was driving a 1996 Honda

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