



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Pirate, parrots set anchor at county fair

Thor, a scarlet macaw, flies up to his trainer, Chris Biro, during the Pirate's Parrot Show on Wednesday at the Umatilla County Fair in Hermiston. Biro uses dozens of exotic birds in his educational show.

PENDLETON

REACH asks to make rec center home base

By EMILY OLSON
East Oregonian

Pendleton's city council is considering a proposal to let a local youth outreach program lease the Pendleton Recreational Center starting this fall.

During Tuesday's work session, City Manager Robb Corbett said he was in negotiation with REACH, a nonprofit hoping to begin daily afterschool programs. The group has its eyes on the former McCune Junior High School building, which now houses a multitude of city programs.

Corbett said there's plenty of space in other facilities if city programs need to relocate. REACH would pay for the building's operational costs, helping keep the center financially sustainable, according to Corbett.

Joe Jackson, a REACH board member, said that Pendleton's atmosphere is detrimental to youth, citing statistics about local teen arrests and graduation rates. The council agreed that the organization's aims are worthy, but raised questions about the specific use of the center.

Multiple councilors asked if the lease would oust the center's current users as some, like children's groups, might not mix well with at-risk youth. Corbett said there were more than enough facilities in Pendleton — such as school buildings — to relocate the existing activities.

But councilor McKennon McDonald said residents are hesitant to "put a religious organization in a city building."

Jackson maintained that REACH does not have a religious agenda, though it would provide at-risk youth with religious support if needed.

For some residents, the hesitancy over the lease has to do with a sense of ownership of the recreation center, said Councilor Dale Primmer.

The council will vote on the lease in early September. Mayor John Turner suggested REACH keep working on the paperwork in the meantime, giving extra thought to sharing the space with existing programs.

In other business: Tuesday's workshop also brought discussions on creating a tax-funded service district for OSU Extension, as well as changing a contract for the ongoing Pendleton Heights construction project.

Mary Corp, the regional director of OSU Extension, asked the council to consider a resolution to include Pendleton in a proposed Umatilla County service district. If enough cities in the county vote yes, the district's creation would be put to a vote in May 2018. If included in the district, Pendleton residents would be taxed at a rate of 33 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. Those taxes would cover some of OSU Extension's loss of federal funding. Corp

said roughly 60 percent of the funding would go to extension services like agricultural education. Forty percent would go to Umatilla County's research centers.

Developer Saj Jivanjee brought a new offer to the council in hopes of continuing to expand the Pendleton Heights subdivision off Tutuilla Road.

He was initially supposed to pay off \$320,000 in liens after completing the 32-unit development, completed in 2016, but asked if he could instead pay \$200,000 and pay the rest after the full project is completed. He would then begin work on the first 20 units of a 100-unit complex.

The city placed liens on the development to cover the cost of about \$1.3 million in infrastructure related to the project, including roads and utilities.

Six students from Pendleton's sister city, Minamisoma, Japan, were formally introduced to the council. They gifted the mayor with a hanging wall scroll bearing advice from a Japanese tea ceremony. The Pendleton Chamber of Commerce presented the students with bracelets from Pendleton's charm trail.

Councilor McDonald, who oversees the trust that helps fund the exchange program, invited all councilors and residents to greet the students should they encounter them around the city. The students are here until Aug. 18.

Regulators deny Carty natural gas plant expansion

Permitting suspended while PGE pursues existing resources

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

Environmentalists cheered a decision Tuesday by the Oregon Public Utility Commission that seemingly torpedoed new plans by Portland General Electric to expand the natural gas-fired Carty Generating Station in Morrow County.

PGE had considered building two new units at Carty to satisfy customer demand after 2020, when the Boardman Coal Plant is scheduled to close. In its most recent integrated resource plan, the utility estimates it will need 561 additional megawatts of capacity to bridge the shortfall and keep up with future growth.

Regulators acknowledged PGE's need for capacity during a lengthy six-hour meeting in Salem. The PUC did not, however, give the green light to go out for bids to expand at Carty, drawing praise from opponents of fracked natural gas.

"To address the climate crisis, we need to transition rapidly off fossil fuels and increase renewable energy

like wind and solar power," said David Van't Hof, acting Oregon director for Climate Solutions. "We commend the Public Utility Commission for recognizing that imperative and rejecting new fracked gas development."

Cathy Sampson-Kruse, an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, also petitioned against burning more natural gas at Carty.

"I am relieved by the Oregon PUC ruling," Sampson-Kruse said in a statement Tuesday. "I fully understand that electric energy is vital in the world we live in, but we stand strong in our belief that solar and wind energy are the correct path forward."

PGE itself suspended efforts to secure permits for two new units at Carty earlier this year, and has instead entered into negotiations to purchase additional power from existing Northwest facilities. Spokesman Steve Corson said those negotiations are ongoing.

It is not yet certain if PGE can satisfy all its

capacity needs through existing resources. If not, Corson said regulators have asked for a market study to provide greater details about other options.

Another aspect of PGE's integrated resource plan detailed how the utility planned to add 175 average megawatts of renewable energy in order to meet Oregon's rising renewable energy goals. Corson said PGE wants to take advantage of federal production tax credits on new projects before the incentives expired.

The utility commission did not approve that strategy either, leaving PGE to regroup on a new plan.

"They invited us to talk further with environmental groups and staff, and come back in 60 days with an update," Corson said.

Corson described Tuesday's meeting as "long, but constructive" and said PGE is pleased that regulators have at least acknowledged their capacity needs moving forward. Both Corson and Van't Hof said they are looking forward to working together on refining policies.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

Forests bump up public use restrictions

East Oregonian

Beginning Friday, the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests will move into Phase C public use restrictions amid extreme wildfire danger.

The restrictions mean all campfires and internal combustion engines — including chainsaws — are prohibited within the forests. Off-road and off-trail vehicle travel is not allowed, and smoking is permitted only in enclosed vehicles, developed recreation sites or in cleared areas.

Liquid and bottle gas stoves are still allowed, as are electrical generators. Generators, however, are allowed only if:

- Fully contained within a pickup truck bed that is empty of flammable material.

- Placed at the center of an area cleared of all flammable material within a 10-foot diameter.

- When factory installed in a recreational vehicle, and the exhaust is discharged at the center of an area cleared of all flammable material within a 10-foot diameter.

Similar restrictions are also in place on lands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry. Landowners in the Northeast Oregon District are also prohibited from grinding, cutting or welding metal or mowing dried grass with power-drive equipment.

As of Tuesday, firefighters on the Umatilla National Forest continue to strengthen containment lines and mop up hot spots on the 167-acre Tupper Corral fire, located 20 miles southeast of Heppner. The blaze, which was reported Tuesday near the Tupper Guard Station, is now 40 percent contained. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

Doug Baxter, fire management officer on the

Heppner Ranger District, said interagency cooperation was key in catching the fire before it could get out of control.

"The additional fire-fighting resources provided by our partners at the Oregon Department of Forestry successfully assisted the district with catching this fire," Baxter said.

On the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, crews are making progress on the Bear Butte fire along the road that leads to Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort near Haines. The fire is holding steady at 492 acres and is now 45 percent contained. Anthony Lakes Highway remains closed, and the resort is still under evacuation.

For the latest information on fires and restrictions in northeast Oregon, call the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center at 541-963-7171 or visit www.bmidc.org.

BRIEFLY

Mandi Miller to perform at Sundown

PENDLETON — Mandi Miller, a 1988 Pendleton High School graduate who resides in New Zealand, will be on hand for a local performance.

She will perform Saturday from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Sundown's Garden Patio at Sundown Grill & Bar-B-Q, 233 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton. People are encouraged to make reservations.

Miller received six awards in the World Championships of Performing Arts in 2012. In addition, Miller, along with her bandmate Mark "Android" Wilson, released "Starman in the Stars: Ode to Bowie" in June 2016.

For more information or to RSVP for Miller's local performance, contact 541-310-1304 or raphael_hoffman@hotmail.com. For more about Miller, visit www.facebook.com/mandi.miller.58.

Train horns blowing in Pendleton during construction

PENDLETON — The installation of new signaling equipment in Pendleton has led Union Pacific trains to sound their whistles as they pass through town.

Justin Jacobs, a media spokesman for Union Pacific, apologized for the local disruption and said the installation should be completed by Thursday afternoon at the latest. The new equipment is likely part of routine maintenance, he said.

The horns, which began about a week ago, caused a few community members to submit complaints to Union Pacific. Pendleton is an established quiet zone, meaning conductors are



Contributed photo by Hal Tapley

Mandi Miller and her bandmate, Mark Android, perform their ode to David Bowie, titled "Starman in the Stars." Miller, a Pendleton native, will perform Saturday in the garden patio at Sundown Grill & Bar-B-Q, Pendleton.

prohibited from using whistles except in emergency situations, such as an obstacle on or near the tracks.

"Any time there's a potential for a safety issue to present itself, the conductors are going to use caution," Jacobs said.

Blocked irrigation water spilling onto Seventh Street

HERMISTON — Hermiston city officials say water that has been flowing down Hermiston's Southwest Seventh Street for the past several weeks is a result of a block in the area, which is causing water to spill out into the street.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said crews this week are trying to find out the exact nature of the block and fix it.

"They think there's some roots or something blocking it, causing water to back up," he said. "It's flowing down Seventh and dumps

into the storm drain, and ultimately into Belt Park," he said.

While the city doesn't know the exact cause of the block, Morgan said the water coming onto the road is not city water, and it's not a leak from a sewer line.

"They've been using the "Vac-On" truck, which sucks out sewer lines. (The truck) is used for all sorts of things, but that water is not sewage," he said, adding that it's mostly a combination of groundwater and irrigation water.

Health Insurance 101 features free information

The Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace is sponsoring "Health Insurance 101" in three regional communities.

The free two-hour workshop is designed to help people understand health insurance. The upcoming presentations are

Tuesday, Aug. 15 from 6-8 p.m. at the Milton-Freewater Public Library, 8 S.W. Eighth Ave., and

Wednesday, Aug. 16 from 6-8 p.m. in Conference Room 1 at Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. In addition, the seminar will be presented Wednesday, Oct. 11 from 6-8 p.m. in the Community Room at Pendleton City Hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave.

The workshop will help attendees prepare for the health insurance open enrollment period that begins in the fall. An experienced health-insurance educator from the Marketplace will explain how health insurance works, describe coverage options and answer questions about health insurance in Oregon.

To register, contact 855-268-3767 or info.marketplace@oregon.gov.

Parks & Rec plans eclipse trip

HERMISTON — Travel arrangements, snacks and eclipse glasses are all featured in a solar eclipse day trip sponsored by Hermiston Parks & Recreation.

The group will depart Monday, Aug. 21 at 7 a.m. from Hermiston City Hall and travel to Baker City to view the historical event. Participants are encouraged to bring their camera and enjoy the two minutes of darkness in the path of totality. The estimated time of return is 3 p.m.

The cost is \$20 for Hermiston residents and \$24 for non-residents. Those who plan to attend need to register by Tuesday, Aug. 15.

For more information, visit www.hermistonrecreation.com. To register, call 541-667-5018 or stop by the recreation office, 180 N.E. Second St., Hermiston.

Group looks for aviation enthusiasts

HERMISTON — An organization that promotes general and recreational aviation invites people to learn more about the Umatilla County Experimental Aircraft Association.

Everyone with an interest in aviation is invited to attend. Participants don't have to have a pilot's license or own an airplane to learn more about Chapter 219 of the Experimental Aircraft Association. The club was chartered more than 50 years ago at the Hermiston Municipal Airport.

The group meets the third Tuesday of each month. The next meeting is Aug. 15 at 7 p.m. in the administrative building at the Hermiston Airport, 1600 Airport Way, located south of town off Highway 395.

For more information, contact Ron Linn at 541-449-3630 or rlcd@eotnet.net.

Job fair seeks vendors

HERMISTON — The Hermiston Conference Center is hosting a Hiring Fair.

The event is Wednesday, Aug. 16 from 2-7 p.m. Area employers are invited to set up vendor space to connect with job seekers.

Vendor space is \$25, which includes a 10x10 booth, an 8-foot table and two chairs. Electricity is available, but vendors must provide their own extension cords and power strips.

For more information, contact the chamber at 541-567-6151 or kelly@hermistonchamber.com.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to news@eastoregonian.com