

HERMISTON

Crews respond to two chicken-related fires

East Oregonian

The Umatilla County Fire District responded to two chicken-related fires on Wednesday.

In the first, at Townhouse Villa Apartments, no one was injured and the damage to the unit was fairly minor. Around 2:30 p.m., residents of the apartments at 1100 S. Hwy. 395, smelled smoke coming from one of the apartments, and knocked on the door to see if anyone was there. They called the fire department, who responded and busted the door open. Smoke poured out of the door and out of the upstairs window. No one was in the apartment, but the cause of the fire was a whole chicken that had been left in a pot on



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan
UCFD firefighters bust down a door to a Townhouse Villas apartment that was filled with smoke Wednesday in Hermiston.

the stove and was smoldering. Apartment owner Mike Jewett said four people live in the two-story unit, and

they were notified of the fire shortly after it happened. "The damage was minimal" he said. "It was

mostly from where the firemen broke down the door."

Rachel Strickland, who lives next door to the unit that was smoking, said several of the neighbors smelled smoke and heard the fire alarm going off. Getting concerned when no one answered, Strickland said she called the fire department.

"I panicked," she said. About an hour earlier, a chicken coop on East Punkin Center Road caught fire, and was fully engulfed before Umatilla County Fire District crews put it out. The fire was close to the house on the same property, but did not affect the home. Fire Marshal Tom Bohm said the fire was caused by a heat lamp, and that five Guinea hens died.

BRIEFLY

Grease fire at ConAgra Foods Hermiston plant

HERMISTON — Umatilla County Fire District crews put out a fire at ConAgra Foods on Westland Road on Wednesday morning with assistance from the Boardman Fire Department.

Crews began fighting the blaze at 6:12 a.m., and had it contained by 6:46 a.m. The fire was confined to the roof of the building. Fire Marshal Tom Bohm said it was caused by a failed water pump, which led to a grease buildup that caught on fire.

Barreto and Hansell holding joint town halls

PENDLETON — Rep. Greg Barreto and Sen. Bill Hansell will be holding a series of meetings with constituents in Umatilla, Wallowa and Union counties this month in conjunction with local chambers of commerce.

The state legislators will be in Pendleton Nov. 8 at 8 a.m. at Hamley's Cafe, 8 SE Court Avenue to meet with Pendleton Chamber of Commerce members and local residents. They will be in Milton-Freewater Nov. 8 at noon in the Rotary room at the Milton-Freewater community building, 109 NE 5th Ave. to meet with Milton-Freewater Chamber of Commerce members and community members. And they will be in Echo on Nov. 9 at 8 a.m. at the Buttercreek Coffeehouse and Mercantile, 201 W Main St. to meet with Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce members and area constituents.

They will also visit La Grande on Nov. 6 and Enterprise on Nov. 9. Barreto represents District 58 while Hansell represents District 29.

BMCC to host mental health forum

PENDLETON — Blue Mountain Community College will host a mental health forum at its Pendleton campus Thursday.

The 90-minute public forum will cover substance abuse, veterans' mental health needs, suicide and mental illness. A BMCC press release promised to explore patient experiences with existing mental health services and how they can be improved in Eastern Oregon.

There will be a panel featuring Amy Ashton-Williams, the director of Umatilla County Social Services, Becky Greear, director of behavioral health services at Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center, Micaela Cathey, the Umatilla regional administrator of Lifeways, and Joyce Bailey, vice president of patient care at St. Anthony Hospital.

The forum is 6:30 to 8 p.m. in Room 200 at BMCC's Science and Technology Building.

Free transportation will be provided to the event through Kayak Transportation's Mission Metro line. The bus will stop at BMCC at 5:10 p.m. and return for pick-up at 7:46 p.m. The rest of the route will follow the Mission Metro's usual route, with several stops in Pendleton and Mission.

For more information, call 541-278-5969.

Grant provides Umatilla County \$5,400 for new ballistic vests

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office announced a federal grant reimbursed the agency for new ballistic vests.

The sheriff's office received \$5,390.79 for the purchase of new ballistic vests. The funding came from the Bulletproof Vest Partnership program through the Bureau of Justice Assistance under the United States Department of Justice.

The average cost of an armor vest is \$700, according to the sheriff's office, and the award reimburses up to 50 percent of the cost of each vest. The award will help the sheriff's office afford vests for officers in the criminal division, corrections division and reserves.

The sheriff's office has until Aug. 31, 2019, to use the funds.

HERMISTON

DEQ hits food storage facility with \$29K fine

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has fined a Hermiston company \$29,534 for operating a fruit and vegetable storage facility without the necessary water pollution control permit.

Carter & Wyatt Holdings LLC was issued the fine in September, and has requested an informal meeting with DEQ to possibly appeal the violation.

The business, located at 78227 Highway 207, takes fruit and vegetable

byproducts and sells them to markets such as animal feed for dairies and feedlots across the country. Luke Dynes, who owns the plant, said it keeps around 1.6 million tons of food out of landfills every year.

DEQ, however, claims the facility needs to have a water pollution control permit since the material is high in nitrogen and may pose a risk to groundwater quality — especially within the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area.

In addition to the fine, DEQ ordered the plant immediately

stop receiving vegetables and dispose of all materials from the site within 30 days. Carson Bowler, a Portland attorney representing Carter & Wyatt Holdings, said they are in discussions with DEQ on a resolution, but did not offer details.

The incident that led to the citation occurred on May 26, when a tanker truck discharged vegetable slurry about 3 feet deep into an unlined pit in the ground at the facility, according to DEQ. The same day, DEQ reported there were liquids pooled and flowing across the

ground at the facility.

Bowler described what happened May 26 as a "one-time event" and an "anomaly."

Dynes, who is a member of Carter & Wyatt Holdings, said the plant opened in 2013, providing value-added products while also helping to protect the environment. As a Hermiston native and local business owner, he said the company strives to be responsible and actively involved in the community.

"This is our home," he said. "This is where we support everybody."

Navy Band jazzes up performance at SAGE Center

East Oregonian

A concert program featuring funk and blues will be presented by the U.S. Navy's Northwest Brass Band.

The concert is Saturday at 6:30 p.m. in the theater at the SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman. The doors open at 6 p.m. There is no admission charge.

Polished musicians, the group offers a high-energy performance for audiences of all ages. The Navy's Brass Band features a trumpet, two trombones, a tenor saxophone, a drum set and a baritone saxophone playing jazz parts. The group's versatility shines with a diverse repertoire including



Contributed photo
The U.S. Navy's Northwest Brass Band will perform a free concert Saturday at the SAGE Center in Boardman.

jazz, New Orleans standards, funk and blues, and an assortment of popular cover songs arranged for the group's lively instrumentation.

Julie Gisi, executive director of Boardman Chamber of Commerce, is looking forward to the performance and hopes people from

throughout the region will attend and show their support.

"We are honored to have the Navy Band Northwest perform in Boardman," she said.

The Navy Band Northwest performs throughout the Pacific Northwest at public concerts and educational outreach events. It has built a reputation of excellence and is widely known for exceptional musical performances.

For questions about the local concert, contact Stefanie Swindler at stefanies@portofmorrow.com or 541-481-7243. For more about the band, visit www.cnic.navy.mil/regions/cnrnw/about/navy_band.html or search Facebook.

Umatilla County starts process to form new ag extension taxing district

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Umatilla County Board of Commissioners kicked off the process to form a new tax district for the Oregon State University Extension Service.

Commissioners Larry Givens and Bill Elfering voted Wednesday morning in Pendleton in favor of initiating the formation of the district, which includes two public hearings. Commissioner George Murdock is out of town.

Eleven of 12 cities in the county passed resolutions putting the Oregon State

University Extension Service district to voters. Umatilla is the lone hold out.

Claire Sponseller, county leader with OSU Extension, told commissioners the citizens' group in favor of the district will talk again to the Umatilla City Council during its meeting Tuesday night.

Staff at Umatilla City Hall referred questions about the public meeting to City Manager Russ Pelleberg, who did not immediately return a call.

County counsel Doug Olsen said the board would hold the first public hearing during its meeting in early

December and the second in January, then the board would decide to place the matter on the May ballot to give voters the final determination.

County commissioners also voted to transfer a portion of West Highland Avenue to the city of Hermiston.

Matt Kenny with county public works told the board the transfer covers a 2,000-foot stretch of West Highland between Southwest 11th and 15th streets. New development is occurring along the road, according to Kenny and Public Works Director Tom Fellows, and the city wants the construction of curbs,

gutters and sidewalk to meet city standards. The county does not have those standards, nor does the county have the equipment to maintain those structures.

And the board voted to

waive the \$2,500 planning fee for Citizens TV, the nonprofit organizations that provides over-the-air TV transmission from a tower on Basket Mountain Road outside Weston.

Citizens TV has to upgrade the tower, and the county charges \$2,500 for a land use decision on towers. Olsen said the county waived this fee in the past for similar organizations.

EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF PENDLETON

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1601 Westgate, Pendleton

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• See the New PHS Food Truck!

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