

HERMISTON

Volleyball club leaves town over local-priority fee policy

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

A local youth volleyball club is upset about the increased fees quoted to their team for using Hermiston School District facilities. But district employees say the fees are a reflection of a long-standing policy to make sure Hermiston students are getting the biggest benefit of the locally-funded facilities.

The coordinator of the Eastern Heat volleyball club posted a message to team parents on Facebook on Thursday morning, saying she had been informed that the Hermiston School District would be increasing their rates for using the gymnasium where they were scheduled to hold tryouts on Sunday.

They had been scheduled to have tryouts at Sandstone Middle School in Hermiston on Sunday afternoon, but on Thursday evening club director Susie Hancock said the club would instead hold tryouts at Irrigon High School.

Hancock, who is also a member of the club's non-profit board, said the district planned to charge the club higher hourly rates for use of the facilities than the \$75 they paid for the entire season when the club



Photo contributed by Susie Hancock

An Eastern Heat volleyball team celebrates after a win last season.

was founded.

"Our players paid \$450 to cover their own uniforms and tournament entry fees last season; this price changed four days prior to tryouts would increase player fees to approximately \$950 per child," Hancock said.

Hermiston School District Director of Operations Brad Wayland said the team would have to pay for two tryout sessions at

\$900 each, 39 weekday practice sessions at \$90 each, and 18 Sunday practice sessions.

"This results in an estimated cost for use of Hermiston SD facilities over their entire season of \$12,870," Wayland said in an email to the East Oregonian. The higher price is because the club doesn't prioritize Hermiston athletes.

The club is a non-profit organization, with players from around

Umatilla, Morrow and Gilliam counties, but not based in any particular city.

"We are an equal opportunity club that prides itself in giving all athletes an opportunity to play on a team, in an area that is the best fit for them and the club. Where their home residence is should be a non-factor," Hancock said in her post to parents.

Hancock said currently there are five districts or schools letting the club use their facilities for free — Hermiston Christian School, Morrow County, Stanfield and Pendleton school districts.

Michelle Jones, the Pendleton School District director of business services, said they charge \$75 per day for outside parties to rent their gymnasiums. But she said they consider that charge on a case-by-case basis, and may waive the fee for certain groups, such as a student organization that's trying to raise money, or a youth sports team that wants to practice in the gym.

Wayland said the district has a three-tier fee policy, with the lowest rate for organizations that give priority to Hermiston students.

"Since our facilities are funded through the support of our commu-

nity, the intent of our procedure is to ensure we prioritize the use of Hermiston SD facilities for Hermiston SD students in order to promote Hermiston SD programs," Wayland said via email.

This is Wayland's first year with the school district. He said first-tier organizations that prioritize membership for Hermiston students only cover personnel costs, while the second tier is for nonprofit or local government organizations. All other users comprise the third tier, and are charged the highest rate.

Wayland said the group was charged the first-tier fee last year because when they had signed up they had indicated that they would prioritize students from Hermiston. But during tryouts, they cut students from Hermiston and gave spots to students from other areas.

"They didn't live up to what the policy has been," he said.

Hancock started the club last year when she moved to the area because her daughter played volleyball and the closest club at the time was in the Tri-Cities. The club is open to athletes ages 9 to 18.

"Last year we didn't know what to expect," she said. "We had 40 to 50 spots, and had over 100 try out."

BRIEFLY

Tree kills Hillsboro man in mountains above Heppner

HEPPNER — A 34-year-old Hillsboro man died Friday hunting in the mountains above Heppner, the Morrow County Sheriff's Office reported. The sheriff's office received a 911 call Friday around 11 a.m. reporting a tree fell on the man, and he was unresponsive and not breathing. They were in a heavily wooded area with a few inches of snow, according to the sheriff's office, and the caller hiked up a ridge to get cellphone service and reach 911.

Before responders arrived, the caller reported the man died. The Heppner Ambulance, Heppner Rural Fire Department and U.S. Forest Service law enforcement assisted the sheriff's office.

The sheriff's office reported the man was in the area "to hunt and enjoy the mountains and the camaraderie of friends." The sheriff's office also withheld identifying the man as of press time, pending notifying his family.

Deputy fires stun gun on burglary suspect

BOARDMAN — A Morrow County sheriff's deputy fired his stun gun Friday morning to subdue a burglary suspect.

Residents outside Boardman at 8:01 a.m. called 911 and reported a stranger was talking to himself and walked into their home, according to a written statement from the sheriff's office. "In the process of the confrontation, both the homeowner and the suspect were injured," the sheriff's office reported.

The agency did not reveal the nature or seriousness of the injuries.

Law enforcement arrived and found the suspect, Marvin Lewis Strickland, 37, of Pendleton, was uncooperative, according to the statement. A deputy fired his Taser gun, struck

Strickland and arrested him for first-degree trespassing, second-degree assault and two counts of first-degree burglary.

Emergency medical personnel checked Strickland at the scene and took him to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, for evaluation. The hospital cleared Strickland, according to the statement, and the sheriff's office took him to the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, where he remains in lieu of \$370,000 bail.

The sheriff's office also stated more charges could be pending. Another ambulance responded to the homeowner and took him to Good Shepherd as well. The sheriff's office did not provide more information about him or his condition.

The sheriff's office reported Strickland lives in Pendleton. State court records show he lived in Boardman as recently as May, and he has an open case in Morrow County Circuit Court for methamphetamine possession.

Accident backs up traffic on Westland

HERMISTON — A single-vehicle wreck stopped traffic going both directions on Westland Road, with limited traffic allowed eastbound from Bridge Road onto Westland on Friday afternoon.

Umatilla County Fire District battalion chief Jimmy Davis said the single occupant was the driver, a female in her 60s or 70s. She was not badly injured.

Traffic on Westland Road was backed up past Riverfront Park while the wreck was cleaned up.

Ukiah issued \$6K fine from DEQ

UKIAH — The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has fined the city of Ukiah \$6,000 for failing to provide monthly reports for wastewater treatment.

According to DEQ, the city submitted just three monthly monitoring reports since August 2016 and

two of those reports did not include the amount of wastewater flowing into lagoons.

Greg Svelund, DEQ spokesman, said city and agency officials were scheduled to meet Oct. 25, though it was not immediately clear if the city intended to appeal the violation. City recorder Donna Neumann did not immediately return calls for comment.

A notice of the fine was issued Sept. 1. The city may request a contested case hearing to dispute the fine.

Downtown Umatilla plan wins award

UMATILLA — Umatilla's downtown vision plan has won an award from the Oregon chapter of the American Planning Association.

The 200-page plan was developed by Portland State University graduate students as a capstone project. Over the course of six months, students traveled to Umatilla to meet with community leaders, business owners and residents and discuss their vision for revitalizing downtown Umatilla.

The students were awarded the Student Achievement in Planning Award for the plan after it was judged by a committee comprised of professional planners from around Oregon.

Umatilla city manager Russ Pelleberg said in a news release that the students' work on the project "reinvigorated interest in redevelopment throughout the city."

"They were invited into homes, became acquainted with residents and worked closely with the Umatilla School District," he said.

Umatilla County's economic development staff helped bring the PSU students to Umatilla as part of the county's outreach to small communities.

PENDLETON

Municipal court judge Perkinson to resign

East Oregonian

After a year on the Pendleton Municipal Court bench, Will Perkinson is giving up the gavel.

At the Pendleton City Council meeting Tuesday, the council will vote to accept Perkinson's resignation effective Jan. 1, putting a quick end to his judgeship.

The municipal court judge is one of the few positions the council appoints directly, and the council chose Perkinson to fill that job in December 2016 after former judge Jeff Wallace retired. Perkinson beat out a trio of local attorneys who proposed a duty-sharing agreement between themselves.

Perkinson, a Pendleton defense attorney who runs his own law practice, earned a \$27,900 salary, health benefits and a \$1,150 city contribution to a health savings account. A part-time position, the municipal judge rules on minor cases like traffic tickets and code violations. The council will also discuss terminating a land lease with a company that transports recreational vehicles for Keystone RV Co.

Ending that lease between the city and Queen B Storage, a subsidiary of Horizon Transport of Wakarusa, Indiana, has been one of the main goals of Gale Marshall since the two sides

signed a 12-year agreement in 2015.

Marshall owns 24 acres of land adjacent to the city's property, both located near Keystone's Westgate plant. Transport companies use the properties to store vehicles ahead of their transport to RV dealerships across the country.

Marshall has argued that the city's lease rate is undercutting his business, causing transport companies to abandon his property for the Queen B lot.

He approached the council at its Oct. 17 meeting and asked members to reconsider the lease. He made the same request at a meeting with the council in May, but the council took no action.

The council will meet at 7 p.m. at the council chambers in city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave.



Perkinson

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