

## COMMUNITY: Will no longer allow events with animals

Continued from 1A

held at the community center and the re-named Hermiston Community Center can be used to foster more community art, music and theater opportunities.

"We will evaluate programs that use the community center and see if maybe there isn't a better home for them," he said.

The building will still be available for rental by a wide variety of groups, however. Fetter said there are still 10 Saturdays available for rental in 2018, and plenty of openings on other days of the week. Fetter said nonprofits will receive 50 percent off the base rental price for large events.

Several policies will remain the same as under the chamber's leadership, including rules governing alcohol use, insurance and deposits. Fetter said one change will be that a city staff member will be required to supervise all events, which will bump up the rental price a bit.

"Previously there was a pretty loose policy where you locked the door on the way out," Fetter said. "We feel we want to protect our investment and make sure there is no unwanted behavior."

He said the department would also like to upgrade



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The Hermiston Parks and Recreation department will be changing the name and the signage at the Hermiston Community Center.

security at the center to use key cards that track when people enter the building, similar to what Hermiston School District uses. He also said events involving animals will no longer be allowed, as the department feels EOTEC is a better home for those.

The new pricing system approved by the council Monday increases the base rental price but also includes more costs in that price instead of itemizing so many things, Fetter said. For the

base price, at the cheapest end a group can rent the Altrusa, Rotary or boardroom for \$50 for an hour, \$75 for four hours or \$100 for an entire day. On the expensive end, renting the great room for more than 300 people is \$1,500 and comes with access for the entire day.

In one example Fetter gave, the Festival of the Trees — a two-day-long nonprofit event in the great room — would have totaled \$2,097 under the Chamber's

system but will cost \$2,272 under the city's pricing structure after base fees and direct costs like clean-up are added together.

On Tuesday while at the community center Fetter said staff are still going through the center's two large storage areas to inventory the furniture and items such as linens. Once that is done, Fetter said they will likely have some more ideas for the center, including some possible upgrades.

## Bundy insists U.S. can't own land, no matter who's president

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The Nevada rancher who had his charges dismissed in a 2014 armed standoff with government agents insisted Tuesday that it's up to the states, not the federal officials, how to manage vast expanses of rangeland in the U.S. West.

Some watching Cliven Bundy's case think his message will find more traction under President Donald Trump, who has moved to open public lands to industry, than it did under former President Barack Obama.

But the states' rights figure who has become an icon in conservative and anti-government circles said public land belongs to states, no matter who is in the White House.

"I don't recognize the federal government to have authority, jurisdiction, no matter who the president is," he said.

Ian Bartrum, a University of Nevada, Las Vegas, law professor who has been writing about the Bundy case and federal land policy, said he sees a blend of beliefs between Trump supporters and Bundy backers.

"It certainly seems like this is a good moment for the Bundys to find a receptive ear in the White House, federal agencies and, perhaps, Congress," Bartrum said.

Bartrum noted that Trump dramatically reduced Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments in Utah and that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is recommending downsizing Nevada's Gold Butte and Oregon's Cascade Siskiyou monuments.

Bundy cattle are grazing in Gold Butte, a rugged area 90 miles northeast of Las Vegas that Obama declared a national monument in December 2016 after years of calls to protect habitat for

endangered desert tortoises. The standoff began over U.S. agents rounding up his cows some 20 years after he quit paying grazing fees to the federal government.

The 71-year-old Bundy appears to relish the return to the public eye after being set free from federal custody Monday for the first time since early 2016.

"Nevada, the Western U.S. and all of America, I think we do need changes. The federal government, BLM, is through suing Western ranchers," he declared, referring to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. "This is the last fire they're going to set."

Bartrum dismissed Bundy's contention that the federal government has no authority over vast public land in the West, saying in a draft law review article that "constitutional doctrine, well-settled in the Supreme Court, expressly recognizes the federal government's power to acquire, retain and regulate" property within a state.

John Lamb, a farmer turned blogger from Montana who attended trials for those charged in the case, said he believes states' rights are prevailing.

"The government has been heavy-handed taking away our rights," Lamb said. "It isn't just about grazing or farming. It's about government overreach and people being locked up on federal charges. I think Trump sees that."

Chief U.S. District Judge Gloria Navarro in Las Vegas dismissed all federal charges this week against Bundy.

The case drew the attention of U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who launched an investigation last month after Navarro declared a mistrial. Sessions appointed Dayle Elieson as interim U.S. attorney.



Bundy

## EOTEC: Estimated cost overruns for 2018 will be \$172,350

Continued from 1A

EOTEC board noted that the cost of constructing the facility was \$17.2 million, which overran what was budgeted by \$210,000. The city and county had already agreed to split the cost of any overruns in EOTEC's budget, in addition to the \$75,000 they automatically contribute to the center's operation costs each year. Venuworks estimates cost overruns for 2018 will be \$172,350.

"This is starting to be real money," councilor Jackie Myers commented.

Councilor John Kirwan said he understood that the EOTEC board was comprised of volunteers doing the best they can, and he appreciated the work they had done in getting construction finished in time for the 2017 Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo. But he said EOTEC has been "one rolling problem-solving event" and it was past time for EOTEC to have a solid



EO file photos

Visitors in May 2016 file through the front doors of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center for an open house for the first of multiple buildings that were built on the grounds.

longterm plan in place.

"I don't know if the way the board is currently operating is part of that vision," he said.

He and Drotzmann both cited a recent problem when one of the fair's two full-time staff members was asked to move out of their office into the event center's ticket booth to make room for Venuworks staff. After the

fair board pushed back at the last-minute request, the EOTEC board gave them a month's reprieve, leaving VenuWorks without an office for one of its three staff members brought in to run the center.

"That's an example of poor planning," Kirwan said.

The office issue highlighted a growing tension between the idea that EOTEC

needs to be profitable and successful 52 weeks out of the year, and the idea that EOTEC was built first and foremost as a replacement for the fair and rodeo grounds and therefore those two events should be the priority even if it means sacrificing some profitability.

The EOTEC board approved leases with the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo in March, but Smith said there was already talk of trying to renegotiate the leases.

Kirwan said if the EOTEC board continues to run the project like it's a fairgrounds and not a year-round event center, "we're going to be having an auction in a few years to auction off EOTEC."

The city council, county commission and EOTEC board are planning a joint meeting on Jan. 22 at 6 p.m. at Hermiston City Hall.

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## CLIMATE: Blackwood worked for U.S. Forest Service for 40 years

Continued from 1A

including Pendleton, often assist when other places burn. A group of Pendleton firefighters recently returned from the Thomas and Creek fires in California.

Ciraulo shook his head in disbelief at the thought of fighting a huge wildfire in December or January.

"The length of fire season is dramatically increasing," he said. "Typically, (California's) fire season would wrap up in October or November and then it was done."

Megafires are fast-moving and hard to corral. In stand-offs between firefighters and flame, fire often wins, at least in the short term.

"The (Eagle Creek) fire spotted across the Columbia River," Ciraulo said. "When a fire spots a half mile ahead of itself, nobody has enough firefighters to stop it. We catch it when the weather changes."

Ciraulo, who started as chief in late 2015, recalled one of his first fires in Pendleton — a barn blaze on a cold December night. One of his captains mentioned needing a brush rig and Ciraulo looked at him quizzically. "A brush rig in December?" he thought. The fire chief looked around and realized a field of non-native grasses near the barn was dry tinder and ready to burn. Two hundred years ago, he said, native fire-resistant grass probably grew on that spot.

Another frustration in the age of megafires is time required of those managing fires. Serving on an incident management team takes increasing time and commitment.

"Used to be, you'd be out for a few weeks in the



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Jeff Blackwood smiles after receiving the first-ever Climate Champion Award, awarded by EOC3.

summer when you make a commitment to a team," said Ciraulo, who serves as incident commander for an interagency incident management team of Oregon and Washington team members. "Now you're out 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 days."

Blackwood nodded at Ciraulo's words. Blackwood's 40-year career with the U.S. Forest Service gives him plenty of perspective. Also, climate change is one of Blackwood's passions of late.

He serves as an EOC3 board member and also facilitated two Eastern Oregon Forum panel discussions in 2015 about climate change impacts to water, fish, wildlife and public health.

After Ciraulo finished, participants discussed the group's strategic plan and other topics. Then board member Don Wysocki walked up to the front of the room to present a plaque to the group's first-ever Climate Champion. When Wysocki

announced Blackwood's name, the former Umatilla Forest Supervisor popped to his feet in surprise and accepted his award.

"I'm absolutely blown away," he said.

Wysocki said the choice of champion was unanimous.

"We wouldn't be what we are now without this guy," he said.

After the meeting, Blackwood shared some of his own thoughts about fire and climate change, recalling early days on the Malheur National Forest when a colleague took him on a forest tour.

"He took me to a 300-acre burn and said, 'That's the biggest fire we've ever had on this district,'" Blackwood said. "Now a 300-acre fire is just run-of-the-mill."

He agreed with Ciraulo's assessment and added a few more climate change worries such as less snow pack and earlier runoff that expose forests to more fire risk. These fires, he said, burn hot through some of our treasured landscapes. Consider this summer's Eagle Creek Fire in the Columbia River Gorge.

"People's favorite places are being dramatically altered," he said.

It's all a little staggering to think about, but Blackwood urged people not to get discouraged by the enormity of climate change.

"It's normal for us to think 'it's bigger than me,'" he said. "But there are so many choices we make each day. Make those choices with the warming planet in mind."

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## PENDLETON: Downtown business owners defended the association

Continued from 1A

Milton-Freewater, The Dalles and Astoria.

Pendleton City Councilor Dale Primmer said the council "caught a lot of hell" from constituents following the last vote to fund the association because the nonprofit was seen as being "duplicative" of other organizations like the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce. As the Pendleton Development Commission, the council approved giving the association \$55,000 for Turner's salary and other operational costs by a narrow 5-4 vote.

Councilor Paul Chalmers, the commission chairman, said the urban renewal district was never meant to pay for a salary outside of those paid to city staff and reminded the audience that the district was set to expire in 2023.

Chalmers suggested the association collaborate with the chamber of commerce, which already receives public funding through Pendleton's hotel room taxes, to help cover its costs. He noted that Turner projected only \$6,000 per year from membership dues.

"When my kids wanted to go to college, they had to step up to the plate and participate in the midst of that," he said. "I find it a little troublesome to want to promote dollars and cents into an entity that is not ... stepping up to the plate."

The downtown business owners in attendance defended the association, recounting how the current iteration of the group is more organized and cohesive compared to other predecessors that tried to organize downtown merchants.

"The downtown association was totally abandoned, shut down, forgotten. For a

number of years, there was nothing," Bruce Gianotti said. "It's a come a long ways from zero, from a point where nobody wanted to do it anymore. It was a dead horse. It did nothing to promote downtown and look at it now."

Angela Thompson of Pendleton Music Co., a member of both the association and the chamber, said the association provides a focus on downtown businesses that the chamber doesn't offer.

Pendleton city staff also spoke in favor of association.

"I don't know how you get the money, but not investing in that Main Street would be absolutely insane," Pendleton Economic Development Director Steve Chrisman said. "I drag every single person that enters this town (onto Main Street). That's what separates Pendleton from every town in America. Take that away and you really have nothing to write home about."

As an ex-officio member of the chamber board, City Manager Robb Corbett said the chamber doesn't have the capacity to assist the association and neither does the city.

Toward the end of the meeting, the council agreed to form a committee with the association to look at funding sources. Turner said the association's current funding would run out in a year.

An emergency services fee for nonprofits was set to be discussed at the workshop, but it was pulled off the agenda at the beginning of the meeting and Corbett did not know when it would be rescheduled.

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