

ENTERPRISE: BMCC's taxing area spans throughout both enterprise zones

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Tax breaks have since expired in Hermiston on \$63.1 million worth of investments, bringing them onto the tax rolls. Another \$3.5 million project by Shearer's foods will come onto the tax rolls July 1.

Pendleton's enterprise zone goes back much further. Pendleton Economic Development Director Steve Chrisman said he has found correspondence relating the city's enterprise zone going back to 1997 and has been around since at least that time. The zone was expanded to cover Pilot Rock in 2004 and was renewed in 2008.

Since 2013, enterprise zone activity has primarily revolved around three businesses: Hill Meat Co., Keystone RV Co. and Rocky Mountain Colby Pipe. Each has received several three-year tax abatements over the past five years.

The recipients are rounded out by Oregon Grain Growers Brand Distillery and Pendleton Woolen Mills. The woolen mills did not hire any new employees, but used the exemption to buy a new loom that increases productivity.

These companies have invested \$19.6 million since 2013 and reported creating 240 jobs in the process. \$2.4 million in investments are now on the tax rolls as their abatements expire, but the rest remain tax-free.

The impact

Morgan said it would be difficult for him to come up with even a ballpark number of how many dollars in property taxes had not been paid due to enterprise zone exemptions. The application lists the total amount of money

the company is investing in the expansion, not what the building or new equipment will be appraised at. So, for example, Eastern Oregon Telecom was recently given an enterprise zone exemption on a \$2 million investment, represented by the new building it broke ground on in September. But Morgan said he would guess roughly \$400,000 of that investment would represent things like engineering and construction management, bringing the actual building's appraised value to less than \$2 million. Then there are formulas to calculate depreciation over time.

"It's actually very hard to estimate how much the companies have saved on their tax bills based on the enterprise zone applications ... these companies always list what they intend to invest, but the actual taxable value may be totally different," he wrote in an email.

Morgan said it's important to remember that once Hermiston got permission from the state to set up the enterprise zone, the regular exemption of three to five years (depending on jobs created) is automatic if a company turns in an application and has fulfilled all the requirements.

"If a company meets all of the requirements for a basic exemption, then it's simply an administrative approval to check that they meet all of the requirements," he said.

Proponents of the enterprise zone argue that a company simply won't locate or expand anywhere that they can't get a tax break, so a city that refuses to offer one will miss out on the jobs and other growth brought by the investment. A report compiled by

Morgan at the end of the 2016-2017 fiscal year before the EOT and Lamb Weston tax breaks estimated the enterprise zone had resulted in "362 new full-time jobs resulting in more than \$9.65 million of new annual payroll circulating through the economy of Hermiston and western Umatilla County as of 2016."

Blue Mountain Community College's taxing area spans throughout Eastern Oregon and both enterprise zones.

BMCC President Cam Preus said staff "haven't put pen to paper" as to how much money enterprise zone exemptions cost the college, but the state helps supplement their general fund to stave off a loss in tax dollars.

Overall, Preus said the benefits of an enterprise zone outweighed the setbacks. She added that BMCC was invited to an upcoming meeting with the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners on how Lamb Weston's \$1 million annual payment will be spent, which could include funding for job training.

Chrisman, Pendleton's economic development director, is also a proponent of the enterprise zone.

Although some of these companies might expand without a tax break, he said it was one of the few incentives communities can use to recruit or retain major employers. Without it, Chrisman said, it would be much harder to keep companies from going to Washington or Idaho, the latter having significantly cheaper labor costs.

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Women will march again with aim to become a political force

(AP) — Activists are returning to the streets a year after a million people rallied worldwide at marches for female empowerment, hoping to create an enduring political movement that will elect more women to government office.

Hundreds of gatherings are planned Saturday and Sunday across the U.S. and in places such as Beijing, Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Nairobi, Kenya.

A rally Sunday in Las Vegas will launch an effort to register 1 million voters and target swing states in the midterm elections.

The 2017 rally in Washington, D.C., and hundreds of similar marches created solidarity for those denouncing President Donald Trump's views on abortion, immigration, LGBT rights and more.

Afterward, a wave of women decided to run for elected office and the #MeToo movement against sexual misconduct became a cultural phenomenon.

"We made a lot of noise," said Elaine Wynn, an organizer. "But now how do we translate that noise into something concrete or fulfilling?"

Linda Sarsour, one of the four organizers of last year's Washington march, said Las Vegas was slotted for a major rally because it's a strategic swing state that gave Hillary Clinton a narrow win in the presidential election and will have one of the most competitive Senate races in 2018.

Democrats believe they have a good chance of winning the seat held by embattled Republican Sen. Dean Heller and weakening the GOP's hold on the chamber.

Organizers say Nevada is also a microcosm of larger national issues such as immigration and gun control after Las Vegas became the scene of the deadliest mass shooting in modern history.

Following the October



In this Jan. 17 photo, Minnie Wood, center, makes signs with her daughters Buckley, right, and Zoey in preparation for a rally in Las Vegas.

Women's March on Pendleton

PENDLETON — For the second straight year, the Women's March on Pendleton will take it to the streets. "This is a peaceful march to show that we will not accept intolerance or injustice," the march's Facebook page states. "Please bring you family, friends, neighbors for an epic day of solidarity."

The march will be much like the original event in 2017. The group will meet at 1 p.m. at the fountain in front of Pendleton City Hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave. The one-mile march will make a stop at the Umatilla County Courthouse and end in the parking lot at Heritage Station Museum.

Last year's event attracted an estimated 400 people.

massacre, the Sunday rally is being held at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas' stadium 10 miles southeast of the famous Strip where a gunman opened fire on a concert, killing 58 people.

Authorities have kept details confidential about security for the Sunday rally at the 40,000-seat stadium.

Ahead of the Las Vegas rally, Planned Parenthood Rocky Mountains will hold a huge voter registration training effort on Saturday as part of a nationwide effort to register over a million voters in 2018.

Minnie Wood, a nurse practitioner who participated in the 2017 gathering in Las Vegas, said she was left with a sense of solidarity and "this feeling of almost a quickening, this resistance brewing."

It also laid the ground-

work for the recent movement that brought a reckoning for powerful men accused of sexual misconduct, Sarsour said.

"I think when women see visible women's leadership, bold and fierce, going up against a very racist, sexist, misogynist administration, it gives you a different level of courage that you may not have felt you had," she said.

Many women inspired by last year's massive marches went on to seek higher office, such as Mindi Messmer, a 54-year-old environmental scientist from Rye, New Hampshire.

Messmer was a state legislator when she attended the 2017 march in her state capital of Portsmouth. She's now a candidate for the seat held by retiring U.S. Rep. Carol Shea-Porter, a fellow Democrat.

LIFEWAYS: Roberts frustrated about Lifeways' reluctance to deal with people who are intoxicated

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consistency in personnel," he said, referring to Lifeways' frequent rotation of leaders based in the county.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said he also felt the meeting was productive, but noted it was first step in a long process.

"Today was getting all the initial players in the room," he said. "Now we have to get down to the nitty gritty. Are there areas as a group, as a county, or as a city where we can step beside Lifeways as a partner?"

Roberts didn't disguise his past frustration with the organization and the general state of mental health care in the county.

He said law enforcement in Umatilla County once had the Blue Mountain Recovery Center in Pendleton as a place to take people going through a mental health crisis.

"It used to be if we found somebody in crisis who was either a danger to themselves or others or unable to care for themselves, we would transfer them to BMRC," Roberts said before Friday's meeting. "If they had drugs or alcohol on board that prohibited the doc from making an evaluation, they went downstairs to detox."

One of the facility's three psychiatrists examined each person.

"If someone stayed, they stayed for 48 hours in the facility, which was staffed and geared to deal with people in crisis or to deal with true mental illness," Roberts said.

Roberts remembers BMRC closing the doors to law enforcement in the mid-1990s. Lifeways was brought in to fill the gap.

"Lifeways comes in on a contract and the entire process just gets set on its ear," Roberts said. "Things have never been what they should be in terms of serving an ever-growing population (of mentally ill in crisis). We have continually participated in audits, collaborative meetings, sequential intercept mapping, this, that and the other thing and nothing ever changes."

Roberts' officers see everything from depression to schizophrenia on the streets. It often falls to the officer on the beat to de-escalate mental



EO file photo

Lifeways said they hope to hire an outside consultant within the next couple weeks.

"Things have never been what they should be in terms of serving an ever-growing population (of mentally ill in crisis)."

— Stuart Roberts, Pendleton Police Chief

crises, he said. Often, with no other options, people with mental illness end up at the emergency room or in jail. And then soon back on the street, problems unsolved.

Roberts said he had been especially frustrated about Lifeways' reluctance to deal with people who are intoxicated. Mental illness and substance use, he said, are often woven together and tough to tease apart. Yet, Lifeways has created too many rules for eligibility, hamstringing the organization.

"Eligibility should not even be a part of the conversation. If we look at the demographic we deal with on a regular basis, it is not unusual for folks suffering with mental illness to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol," Roberts said. "If they are under the influence, (Lifeways) won't even talk to them."

But he acknowledged Lifeways' openness at the meeting. "I'm appreciative they came to the table with a level of humility," he said.

Hoekstra had most recently worked in Wenatchee, Washington as the Behavioral Health Director at Columbia Valley Community Health. Hoekstra said his background as a therapist and drug and alcohol counselor helped him develop an interest in dealing with broader health

care issues. He said he visited Umatilla County before accepting the job, and was impressed with the people he met.

"Lifeways, and the systems of care in Umatilla County, are not unlike other areas with their challenges," he said at a meet-and-greet on Thursday. "There [is] no way to understand the totalities of those challenges, but you hit the ground running."

He said he was looking forward to meeting with the local law enforcement groups on Friday to look at the community's health care needs.

Hoekstra said he was not informed of GOBHI's announcement before it was released.

He said he had identified several goals as Lifeways' new CEO.

"Creating a collaborative, effective partnership with a community," Hoekstra said. "Continually improving [systems] over time, improving outcomes for patients, and controlling costs."

Roberts said he was eager to move forward.

"It's easy to make a commitment. The tough part is delivering," he said. "I would say it's as good as I could have hoped for."

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