

MILTON-FREEWATER

PGG sells store to wildfire contractor

East Oregonian

Another vacant Pendleton Grain Growers building is finding new life.

According to Umatilla County records, PGG sold its Milton-Freewater retail store for \$305,000 to Curtis Pumphrey, a local man who's looking to expand his contract firefighting business.

In an interview Thursday, Pumphrey said he was a firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service for a decade before deciding to transition to the private sector in 2010.

He worked in subcontracting for a few years before creating his own company — Black Forest LLC — in 2013. Black Forest has a contract with the federal government to support forest service staff during wildfire season.

"It was a gamble, but it's working out so far," he said.

When looking to expand his business further, Pumphrey said the 29,500-square-foot facility on 217 E. Broadway Ave. was a good fit for what he wants to do.

Pumphrey will continue to run Black Forest's wildfire support out of the new building, but the facility will



Photo contributed by Realty Marketing/Northwest

PGG sold its Milton-Freewater retail store for \$305,000 to Curtis Pumphrey, a local man who is looking to expand his contract firefighting business.

also feature a commercial auto repair shop. In addition to housing Black Forest's existing fleet, the building will also be used to assemble new support trucks and other firefighting vehicles.

Pumphrey expects to hold a soft opening on March 5 and a larger grand opening barbecue on March 10.

PGG has slowly offloaded its vacant stores after shuttering its retail division in

2014. The Milton-Freewater retail space now the third Umatilla County store to transfer hands.

The Hermiston PGG turned into a NAPA Auto Parts store while the Athena PGG was bought by the Athena Mainstreet Association, which is still considering what to do with it but wants to keep it community-owned.

The Milton-Freewater sale actually represents a

bargain for Pumphrey. After the property sat on the market for a while, PGG lowered the price from \$628,800 to \$400,000 in October.

The last PGG retailer yet to be sold is PGG's flagship Pendleton store, which sits empty at 1000 S.W. Dorion Ave. PGG is also trying to sell the property across the street from the store, which contains Dave's 12th Street Food Mart.

PENDLETON

City councilors concerned by budget projections

By ANTONIO SIERRA

East Oregonian

Given an early look at future budgets, the Pendleton City Council has some concerns.

At a workshop Tuesday, City Manager Robb Corbett shared a memo with the council that showed some projections for the general fund, the city's sole discretionary fund that covers services like police, fire, parks and the library.

Corbett's memo projected revenues would rise by 2.7 percent per year while expenses would go up by 3.2 percent annually. That means the projected gap between expenses and cost would go from \$120,000 in the 2018-2019 fiscal year to \$430,000 in 2022-2023.

Additionally, the city's beginning fund balance would fall from \$3 million in 2018-2019 to \$1.8 million in 2022-2023.

"To me, this is a little disturbing," Councilor Paul Chalmers said.

The beginning fund balance is important to the

city because it tides Pendleton over from the start of the fiscal year in July to November, when the city receives property tax revenue.

While the city would ideally have \$4 million in the beginning fund balance, Corbett downplayed the numbers, saying it was lower than usual because the city was diverting money to its facility maintenance backlog.

As of July 1, Pendleton facilities had an estimated \$4.7 million in deferred maintenance in addition to \$1.1 million in annual maintenance costs.

The city isn't expecting any breaks from the Public Employee Retirement System either, projecting a system-wide increase of \$400,000 in 2020-2021, half of that coming from the general fund.

Although he considers himself a conservative budget maker, Mayor John Turner said there could be some new sources of income for the city that could boost revenue projections.

Turner said a few new housing projects could provide more revenue

from property taxes and he estimated the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range could start generating money for the general fund in three to five years.

When Pendleton's urban renewal district expires in 2023, Chalmers, the Umatilla County director of assessment and taxation, said the city could receive as much as \$400,000 to \$500,000 per year in property tax revenue.

Beyond future possibilities, Pendleton already developed a new source of revenue that is starting to bear fruit in 2018: marijuana. Turner said the council will need to figure out how to spend money from marijuana sales tax revenue, which is projected to exceed \$200,000 in the 2018 calendar year.

But some councilors' worries weren't alleviated.

Councilor Scott Fairley said Corbett's memo confirmed his suspicions that Pendleton's financial health wasn't as robust as it should be.

Councilor Dale Primmer said the city needed to target "soft pockets of money" to

fortify its income, a practice he used as an administrator for the Umatilla County Department of Community Justice.

During the recession, the department was trying to avoid instituting a second round of layoffs when staff noticed that supervision fees weren't being collected consistently. By being more consistent in collecting practices, Primmer said revenue from supervision fees increased from \$60,000 to more than \$200,000 in the span of one year.

Councilor Neil Brown said the city needed to take inventory of all of its assets and consider what should be kept or not, referencing Pendleton's vast collection of parks and recreation properties, an above average amount for a city Pendleton's size.

"We need to define how much stuff we need to keep. ... We need to do a 'stuff analysis,'" he said.

Corbett said they've already done that with some of their properties, like the old police station at 109 S.W. Court Ave., which the city is trying to sell.

connections that benefit his constituents.

Commissioners are based in the county courthouse in Pendleton, but Givens used to hold regular office hours in Milton-Freewater. He said he backed off that last year because he felt there was not much need for it.

Givens also said the county's budget process allows department heads the freedom to prioritize their needs, then the county's budget committee makes recommendations and the chief financial officer weighs in. But the commissioners make the final determination.

"When you are in charge of the citizens' dollars, you have to make those go as far as they can," Givens said.

Umatilla County has three commissioners, all are at-large. Commissioners serve four-year terms. Each position has an annual salary of \$90,852 a year plus benefits.

Shafer is a communications sergeant with the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office. If he were to prevail, he would have to quit that job. The county charter prohibits a county employee from serving on the board.

Qualified candidates have until March 6 to file.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

Athena mayor to run for Umatilla County commissioner

By PHIL WRIGHT

East Oregonian

Athena Mayor John Shafer announced he is challenging incumbent Larry Givens of Umatilla in the race for Umatilla County commissioner.

Shafer in a media announcement said he is running on the motto, "Relationships are primary." He said commissioners need to get to all parts of the county and was critical the county is underserving residents in the Milton-Freewater area. The county has an office there, he said, but he was not sure how often people visit it. He promised to hold office hours in Milton-Freewater one day a week.

He also advocated for the county to create a priority list for the budget and was critical of the county's chief financial officer having too much say.

Shafer did not respond to phone calls Thursday. His announcement first appeared in the *Valley Herald* newspaper. As county offices closed Thursday, Shafer had yet to officially file his candidacy.

Givens filed in October to seek a fourth term. He agreed relationship building is key to effective leadership as a county commissioner and said he has built relationships and

Umatilla County pushes state for watermaster post

By PHIL WRIGHT

East Oregonian

The Oregon Water Resources Department is working to hire a watermaster to work in Milton-Freewater. Umatilla County Commissioner Larry Givens called that welcome progress.

The position stems from a deal the county made in 2016 to move its watermaster division employees to the state agency. The deal also called for the county to pay \$100,000 a year to Water Resources, which in turn would staff a full-time watermaster in Milton-Freewater.

Givens said last year that did not happen, so he took on the task of pushing the state to make good on its promise. Diana Enright, public information officer for Water Resources, said interviews for the post will start next week.

Givens said he and members of the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council held a conference call Monday with Water Resources director Tom Byler to discuss the situation.

"We made it very clear that you have the funds from us," Givens said. "Now let's get a person out there."

Water Resources wanted the watermaster to work out

of Pendleton and commute to Milton-Freewater as needed, Givens said, but irrigators there need someone on site to navigate the convoluted stream of water rights, and the county wants that as well.

He also suggested once the state makes its selection and gets the new hire trained and ready to go, the person needs to reach out and talk with the irrigators. Givens said building and maintaining relationships can go a long way to mitigating problems when the state cuts back on someone's water use.

The commissioners also warned if the state does not come through, the county will pull the funding.

Water Resources also is working to get funding to hire several hydrologists to study the Walla Walla Sub-Basin, Givens said. The agency in 2017 determined the sub-basin has a water management problem due to decreasing groundwater levels in basalt aquifers.

Enright said she did not have the specifics of the proposal, but Water Resources has tried in past sessions to get funding for groundwater studies and will continue to. She said such studies would gather data the department needs to make informed decisions.

BRIEFLY

Athena's Gem Theatre receives \$84K solar array

ATHENA — Athena's Gem Theatre and Star Saloon is getting its own power source.

Pacific Power announced its Blue Sky renewable energy grant program provided \$84,250 to install a 26-kilowatt solar power array that will produce enough energy to power the theatre year round.

A community group in 2005 took on restoring the vintage theater on Main Street, which includes the neighboring Star Saloon. The nonprofit organization Athena's Gem Inc. now oversees the project. Rob McIntyre, Athena's Gem board treasurer, said in a written statement the solar installation "will allow us to operate year around by substantially reducing our overall utility overhead expense."

Without the power savings, the theatre faced closing in August and in January to save on heating and cooling costs.

The restoration project also received \$39,120 in August 2017 from the Oregon Cultural Trust for a new HVAC system and aims to open the Gem this year. Lori Wyman, Pacific Power's representative in Umatilla County, said the solar project should be operational by October.

Blue Sky also provided \$60,000 for a low-impact hydro project to produce 18 kilowatts at Wallowa Lake



EO file photo

Weston-McEwen band instructor Rob McIntyre has been a driving force in the restoration of the Gem Theater in Athena.

State Park, Joseph. All told, Pacific Power reported it is providing upwards of \$1.1 million for new renewable energy investment in 2018 to generate 675 kilowatts of new energy capacity.

Recital features cello students

PENDLETON — The public is invited to a cello recital featuring students of Loree McKenna with accompaniment by Myrna Van Cleave.

The event is Tuesday at 7 p.m. at Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St. There is no admission charge.

Those performing include Matthew Clayville, Shae Wyland, Sage Wyland, Elijah Spencer, Owen Easley, Matthew Estrada, Paige Pitner, Ashtyn Larsen, Michael Morrow, Reilly Lovercheck, Jenna Harrison and Kieric Speakman, all of Pendleton, and Shiela

Burkhardt of Hermiston.

In addition, a pair of quartets will play, including Umatilla String Quartet featuring Tyler Simpson, Ithea Engum-Corral, Kristen Gregg and Jenna Harrison; and the Nifty Note Narwahls with Reilly Lovercheck, Ashtyn Larsen, Paige Pitner and Sage Wyland.

For more information, contact McKenna at 541-276-4237 or lorees645@gmail.com.

Fire marshal to recognize sizzling achievements

SALEM — People who know civilians or fire service personnel who provide outstanding work in fire prevention or public fire safety education are encouraged to submit their names for an award.

The Golden Sparky recognizes fire service personnel and the Silver

Sparky goes to civilians. The Oregon fire marshal's office is accepting nominations from the public for a fire service, individual persons or other agencies for consideration.

"Oregon has a great history of public service in fire safety," said Jim Walker, Oregon state fire marshal.

In addition to recognizing the importance of fire prevention and education, Walker said they want to honor those who are committed to making a difference.

The nomination deadline is Friday, Feb. 23. Submit completed forms, which are available at www.oregon.gov/osp/SFM, to sally.cravinho@state.or.us or Sally Cravinho, 3565 Trelstad Ave. S.E., Salem, OR 97317. For questions, call 503-934-8205. Awards will be presented during the 2018 Oregon Fire Marshal Conference in March.

<p>WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO</p> <p>2/16 - 19</p> <p>Cineplex Show Times</p>	
<p>\$5 Classic Movie • 2/21 • 12:00 PM</p> <p>Ghost</p>	
<p>Black Panther (PG 13)</p> <p>1:00* 7:00 ED 4:00 10:00</p>	
<p>Early Man (PG)</p> <p>12:00* 2:10* 4:30 6:40 8:50</p>	
<p>Peter Rabbit (PG)</p> <p>11:40* 2:00* 4:20 6:50 9:00</p>	
<p>15:17 To Paris (PG13)</p> <p>12:10* 2:30* 4:40 7:10 9:30</p>	
<p>Fifty Shades Freed (R)</p> <p>11:50* 2:20* 4:50 7:20 9:50</p>	
<p>* Matinee Pricing</p> <p>wildhorsesort.com • 541-966-1850</p> <p>Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216</p>	

Are You Pendleton's Luckiest Leprechaun?

Find The First Clue
Read The Saturday Issue Of
The East Oregonian, Feb 17th

Be the fastest to follow all clues before
St. Patrick's Day and you may be able to
discover a 'pot of gold' at the end
of the rainbow and some other riches
along the way.

\$200 Cash Prize Donated By Banner Bank

Please direct questions, concerns and leprechaun sightings to Molly Turner at the Pendleton Downtown Association
(541) 304-3912 • downtown.pendleton@yahoo.com
Like the 'Pendleton Downtown Association' Facebook page for hints to help you along your way.