



EAST OREGONIAN

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One dollar

UMATILLA COUNTY HEALTH REPORT

STILL BAD, BUT BETTER

MISSION

Quaempts picked as interim CTUIR director

East Oregonian

MISSION — Eric Quaempts has been named interim executive director of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

The tribes' Board of Trustees announced Tuesday that the new executive staff assignment was made Monday and was effective immediately.

"I am humbled and honored to have the opportunity to serve as the interim executive director," said Quaempts, according to the release.

"I hope to provide continuity for the board and organization, assist the board in framing their priorities, and help set the next executive director up for success."

Quaempts has served the past 14 years as the director of natural resources for the CTUIR. Prior work includes serving as a wildlife biologist for both the Tribes and the U.S. Forest Service. He has also served for eight years on Oregon's Watershed Enhancement Board, including five as co-chair, served as a BOT-appointed representative of the CTUIR's Umatilla Basin Water Rights Negotiation Team, and on several water policy advisory groups in Salem.

Quaempts will serve in this interim capacity until the Board of Trustees hires an executive director. The search for a new executive director is underway and following the policies for recruitment and review, according to the release.

The trustees also reassigned Chuck Sams III, former interim executive director, to his regular duties as communications director.



Quaempts



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Dr. Norman Sitz performs an abdominal check on patient Jim Carey during a routine physical at his medical office Tuesday in Pendleton. A shortage of primary care doctors is one place Umatilla County lags behind most of the state.

Statewide report shows Umatilla County has bad habits, but indicates some advances in healthy outcomes

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

There's good news and bad news.

The County Health Rankings report came out today, rating almost every county in the nation on health outcomes and behaviors. Researchers scrutinized smoking, binge drinking, obesity, sexually transmitted diseases, teen births and other health indicators.

Umatilla ranked a dismal 32nd of 36 Oregon counties for 30 health factors, falling one place from last year. A third of Umatilla County adults are obese, compared to the state rate of 26 percent. Eighteen percent of adult residents smoke. Teen

births numbered 44 per 1,000 females aged 15-19, compared with the state's 22.

The high school graduation rate of 71 percent held steady from last year, compared with the state's 75 percent.

The percentage of residents without health insurance fell from 13 percent in 2017 to 11 percent this year, but trails the statewide rate of 8 percent. Another area of concern is the ratio of primary care physicians. For each 1,960 Umatilla County residents, there is one doctor compared with the state's 1,070-to-one.

That's the bad news.

The good news came in the

See HEALTH/8A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Dr. Norman Sitz checks a printout before visiting a patient on Tuesday at his medical office in Pendleton.

HERMISTON

City, county plan \$4.6M water project

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

A new water project co-funded by the city of Hermiston and Umatilla County could increase housing development in the northeast part of Hermiston and save taxpayers money on a future school bond.

The two entities have approved a memorandum of understanding to use approximately \$4.6 million of payments in lieu of taxes from Lamb Weston to construct a new 1 million gallon water tower and distribution system in northeast Hermiston. Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the new storage tank and system would increase the city's water storage capacity beyond

its current 18 hours' worth, and would make future development in the northeast part of the city — including Theater Lane and Punkin Center — easier and less expensive.

"That area up there holds most of the developable land in the city of Hermiston," he said.

Area employers, including Lamb Weston, have noted that Hermiston's housing shortage has made it difficult for them to find a large enough workforce for their operations. Morgan also said that in 2015 the U.S. Census Bureau found that 53 percent of jobs inside Hermiston were filled by people living outside Hermiston, causing local businesses to lose out on those customers and the city to lose out on taxes.

"The housing issue has been studied to death, we know we need to do something about it," Morgan said.

As the city has studied ways to boost housing development in the city, developers have said that the price of land in Hermiston has gone up so much that it is hard to turn a profit on new housing if any extra expenses come up. Morgan said in the northeast part of town developers have come up with expensive "piecemeal" solutions to the low water pressure issue, but those solutions won't continue to work for many more developments. The new water project, the city and county hope, will decrease expenses

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County budgets may change if OSU district is approved

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County gave \$321,090 this budget year to the Oregon State University Extension Service and could give \$397,154 in the upcoming cycle. Commissioner Larry Givens said the exact figure depends on whether voters in May approve a new taxing district to support the service.

"Provided it passes, we then, of course, will look at the funding needs of the Extension," Givens said.

The tax proposal calls for creating new service districts in Morrow and Umatilla counties for OSU Extension with a rate of 33 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. For a \$150,000 home, that would add \$49.50 a year to the tax bill.

The rate would be permanent, meaning it could not increase. At the 33 cent mark, the districts would raise approximately \$1.7 million in Umatilla County and \$700,000 in Morrow County, according to Mary Corp, Extension regional administrator.

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