

WEEKEND EDITION



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## Breaking down the ag service district

How much it costs, what it will provide and who makes the call

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

Umatilla and Morrow County voters in the May election will decide whether to add two new tax districts to fund staff and operations for the Oregon State University Extension Service. Both counties have their own ballot measures that each propose a property tax rate of 33 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value.

Residents are asking questions about what this will mean. Pendleton City Council candidates even had to field a question about the Extension Service district at Thursday night's forum.

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions:

### How much will the tax bring in?

The tax would raise approximately \$1.7 million in Umatilla County and about \$700,000 in Morrow County.

It would pay about 25 percent of what the Extension Service needs to operate. Regional administrator Mary Corp said that is needed to help offset state funding cuts and meet a mandate to find local revenue to fill the gap. Over the years, she said, the Extension Service has relied on multiple methods to meet that requirement, but none have been stable and sustainable. The new tax would fix that, she said.

### Who collects that tax revenue and where does it go?

The county collects the revenue, and the funds stay there. Oregon budget law mandates the district's tax revenue would get its own fund and not go into the county general fund.

Corp also said the budgets from the two counties would remain separate "all the way until paying the bills."

See DISTRICT/12A

## UMATILLA



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Retired NFL safety Anthony Newman talks to students about the importance of nutrition during an assembly Friday at McNary Heights Elementary School in Umatilla.

# ACTIVE BODIES, FULL STOMACHS

## McNary Heights awarded for school wellness programs

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN  
East Oregonian

Nearly every McNary Heights Elementary student shows up to school at 8 a.m., 40 minutes before class begins.

They spend 15 minutes on the playground, then gather in their classroom to share breakfast.

It's part of the "Breakfast after the Bell" program that promotes physical activity and a good meal to start the day, and the

Umatilla school was recognized Friday with the statewide School Wellness Award for its efforts.

Through federal grants, child nutrition director Rikkilyn Larsen was able to secure funding to provide free breakfast for all students in class, which always includes a hot and cold option, as well as fruit and milk.

"I like how we have breakfast in the classroom because the kids don't feel rushed," said fifth-grader Cira Larsen.

The idea, said McNary Heights vice

principal Nicole Coyle, is for students to meet before class, share a meal, and get to talk with each other before beginning the day.

"While they're eating, they'll spend time talking about the weekly character traits," Coyle said. "This week, we talked about what it means to persevere."

Fifth grade teacher Maximo Bedolla said he's noticed his students are more alert after breakfast in class.

See WELLNESS/12A

## PENDLETON

# Five-pronged approach to economic development

## City allocates more than \$500,000 for development, tourism

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

In lieu of assigning economic development duties to a single department or staff member, the city of Pendleton spreads hundreds of thousands of dollars to several different departments and nonprofit organizations.

The Pendleton City Council this week authorized permanent funding for one of the town's latest economic development efforts — the Pendleton Downtown Association. The city government now funds at least five positions with economic development among their duties, a number that's grown steadily in the past decade.

While the exact number fluctuates from year to year, Pendleton is now committed to spend well more than \$500,000 annually on economic development between internal employee salaries and financial contributions to organizations with their own staff, including the downtown association and Travel Pendleton.



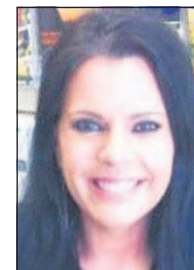
Pat Beard



Steve Chrisman



Charles Denight



Kristen Dollarhide



Molly Turner

### EXPANSION

The city has avoided using property tax revenue to fund these positions and contributions, instead turning to hotel room taxes, the urban renewal district and business license fees to cover the bulk of expenses.

City Manager Robb Corbett, who championed the downtown association's proposal when it went before the council, said it's not unusual to have so many municipally funded entities working on economic development.

According to Corbett, the two pillars of Pendleton economic development are industrial business and tourism.

Although Steve Chrisman's responsibilities were broad when he was hired as economic development director in 2012, Corbett said

Chrisman's focus turned to development at the airport's industrial park and the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range when Corbett added airport manager duties to Chrisman's job description.

The city has long sent money to the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce and Travel Pendleton, its tourism-focused subsidiary, but the city has started expanding its roster of economic development employees in the past three years.

The Pendleton Convention Center manager was made a full-time position again when the city hired Pat Beard in 2017, the idea being that the position would have a greater focus on attracting overnight events.

See ECONOMY/11A

