PENDLETON

Bowman project gets $341K grant

Al Plute to act as own contractor

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

A significant amount of money from the Pendleton Development Commission's second story program is now invested in the third story of the Bowman Building. Acting as the development commission, the Pendleton City Council voted Tuesday to grant building owner Al Plute $340,928 from the second-story and façade grant programs to add 18 apartment units to the third floor of the 17 S.W. Frazer Ave. building. Collectively, the grants cover about 27 percent of the project's cost.

Mayor John Turner said Plute's project was exactly the kind of investment the city was looking for.

"We've been trying to get projects like this going for a long time downtown," he said. "I wish Al well. I hope he makes a profit off of it and leads the way for a number of other building owners downtown that we're trying to entice to do similar projects."

Councilor Scott Fairley was concerned that much of the information about Plute's grant applications was coming to the council during the meeting, which didn't give him much time to consider it.

City Manager Robb Corbett said Plute struggled to secure multiple bids for the project, an eligibility requirement for the project.

The lowest bidder ended up being Plute himself, who said he could complete the project for $1.3 million acting as his own contractor.

Corbett said he wasn't comfortable recommending the grant request until he met with Joseph Hull of McCormack Construction earlier Tuesday afternoon.

According to Corbett, Hull verified that they were good bids and explained that the most likely reason Plute wasn't receiving many bids is because most construction companies were booked with other projects during the warm-weather months.

A former city councilor, Plute also tried to alleviate Fairley's worries by highlighting his past track record.

"This isn't my first time doing a project and doing a project under these circumstances," he said. "I did one with the Brown Building: it's been successful. I did one with the St. George Plaza and it's been successful."

He added that no one interested in downtown second story development will be able to complete their projects for less money than the Bowman Building.

Ultimately, the council unanimously voted to approve the grants, although Councilor McKennon McDonald recused herself because of personal dealings between Plute and her husband, Jordan McDonald.

Plute said he would meet with lenders to secure financing for the project and promised to update the council as the project went along.

HERMISTON

Students become the teachers

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

Hannah Thompson, Courtney Wheeler and Stephanie Miears, students in the Oregon Teacher Pathway class, will study education at EOU starting in the fall.

Many students would love to get inside the mind of a teacher. For the past two years, some Hermiston students have been taking a class that allows them to do that — with the hopes of finding out if they'd like to be teachers themselves.

Students in the Oregon Teacher Pathway class conducted research projects, each focusing on a specific aspect of teaching and how it impacts student success. The eighteen students will present their findings at the second annual Oregon Teacher Pathway Research Night, at Hermiston High School's library on Monday, May 21 at 6 p.m.

In its second year at Hermiston High School, the research-based class aims to foster diversity in the field of teaching, and give students the opportunity to gain college credit while still in high school, and to encourage them to become teachers.

Research topics included changing core requirements to affect the dropout rate, the benefits of preschool programs, including career and technical education in core requirements, and how handwriting instruction impacts student success.

Some students picked a topic to which they had a personal connection.

Senior Stephanie Miears wrote her paper about teacher-student relationships in the classroom — a topic she said was inspired partly by her own experience.

"I've had good teachers," she said. "Our relationships have made me want to be a better student."

Courtney Wheeler's research paper was about programs that low-income schools offer to students.

"I thought it would be easy to relate to, because we have so many low-income schools here," she said.

She said she found out about projects like the Backpack Program, which sends students home with a backpack full of food supplies, as well as helping students afford clothing or activities.

"We just had our prom, and upstairs (at Hermiston High School), there was a place to donate dresses," she said. "If you couldn't afford it, you could find a dress there."

Hannah Thompson's project focused on how teachers can reach students with different learning styles.

"One thing I learned is that students benefit from knowing what type of learner they are," she said. Thompson said she was able to observe some of the different learning styles in action while working at a local elementary school. During math lessons, she said, styles would become more apparent.

"One liked to use graphs, and one would prefer a number line," she said.

Students spent the whole year in the Oregon Teacher Pathway class learning about different aspects of teaching, and honing their research skills.

"We're used to the 'intro paragraph, three body paragraphs, closing paragraph,'" Thompson said. These essays were longer and more detailed, she said, and students learned how to navigate some of the research databases that will become frequently-used tools in college.

Teacher Ericka Keefauver said the program has grown, from nine students last year to 18 this year, and she hopes to see even more sign up in the future.

Four of this year's students, including Miears, Thompson and Wheeler, are headed to Eastern Oregon University to study education.

Hermiston passes supplemental budget

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The Hermiston City Council passed a supplemental budget Monday as the fiscal year draws to a close.

The supplemental budget included $20,000 for a feasibility study for a new aquatic or recreation center. In the 2018-2019 budget, which the city's budget committee has passed but the city council has yet to approve, a parks foreman position is being added to address day-to-day maintenance of parks, freeing up the parks and recreation director to address more longterm vision projects like the feasibility study and a parks master plan.

City departments cannot spend more money than the city council has appropriated to them, so when unexpected expenses come up staff must go back to the council for approval of a supplemental budget. Monday's supplemental budget included several items that the city had not planned for when it passed the budget a year ago, including $33,000 for a boiler repair at the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center and $35,000 for a pump repair on a city well.

City manager Byron Smith said the supplemental budget was a net increase, however, due to the fact that it included $595,000 in revenue from Umatilla County for equipment and other supplies for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

On Monday the council also approved a lease with Ross-Brandt Electric. The electrical contractor has been leasing space inside the "blue hangar" at the Hermiston Municipal Airport for years, assistant city manager Mark Morgan said, but Federal Aviation Administration rules dictate the company must give up the space to an aviation-related tenant if one comes along and requests the space. Morgan said the ground lease the council approved Monday was for approximately one acre of city-owned land on Airport Road where Ross-Brandt Electric plans to build a new building, allowing the city to maintain the company as a tenant while also freeing up space inside the airport for an aviation-related tenant.

During the council reporting portion of Monday's meeting, Clara Beas Fitzgerald said the Hermiston Cinco de Mayo's first year out at EOTEC was a success.

She said organizers estimated about 5,000 people attended over the course of the weekend. That was a little less than last year's attendance, she said, but last year had great weather while this year saw rain. The entertainment had to be moved inside the event center on Sunday due to the downpour, but Beas Fitzgerald praised Al Davis, the new EOTEC manager brought in by VenuWorks, as "very flexible and understanding" and said he was representing the city well at EOTEC.

"He wanted to make things work," she said.

Mayor David Drotzmann said EOTEC has been very busy lately. Events held out there in the last few weeks have included Cinco de Mayo, bull riding, college rodeo, high school rodeo, a Mother's Day rodeo and festival, a rock and gem show, meetings and private events. An audience member requested the city look into creating a master calendar of large events hosted at EOTEC, the Hermiston Community Center and Hermiston School District facilities so that local restaurants can have a heads-up about large crowds of visitors coming into town.

The next Hermiston City Council meeting is May 29. It is being held on a Tuesday to avoid Memorial Day.

BRIEFLY

Air museum soars with grand opening

PENDLETON — With a goal of preserving Pendleton's aviation and military history, the Pendleton Air Museum is celebrating its downtown home.

A group of enthusiasts initially formed in 1989. And nearly 30 years later, they opened the doors to their first physical museum last fall. The group is celebrating with a Pendleton Chamber of Commerce ambassadors ribbon-cutting event. The grand opening is Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (ribbon-cutting at 11:15 a.m.) at 21 S.W. Emigrant Ave., Pendleton. There is no admission charge.

People are invited to stop by and check out the new history and cultural museum. The event will include refreshments and door prizes. Be sure to bing a camera and have your picture taken with a Rosie the Riveter or a World War II soldier. Also, people can learn how to get involved as a museum member.

For more information, contact Becky Dunlap at pendletonairmuseum@gmail.com, 541-278-0141 or visit www.pendletonairmuseum.org.

BMCC ag department sets surplus auction

PENDLETON — People can pick up needed items at the Surplus Equipment Auction at Blue Mountain Community College.

Organized by the school's agriculture department, the event is Saturday at 9 a.m. in the Umatilla Hall north parking lot at 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton. A preview is available from 8-9 a.m.

Everything from a 1981 Chevrolet truck, tool boxes and a Craftsman table saw to a Hesston self-propelled swather, irrigation pipes and Powder River panels and gates will be up for bid. Cash, VISA and debit cards will be accepted. A partial list of items and some photos are available at www.bluecc.edu/auction. All items are sold as-is and must be removed on the day of the sale.

For more information, contact Preston Winn at 541-278-5847 or pwinn@bluecc.edu.

Writing workshop features regional authors

PENDLETON — Writers interested in honing their skills and hearing from regional authors are invited to a special event in Pendleton.

The Oregon Writing & Literary Summit is Saturday from 1-6 p.m. in Pioneer Hall at Blue Mountain Community College, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave. BMCC in coordination with the Pendleton Public Library and Oregon Humanities are offering the event free of charge.

The opening keynote speaker is Robin Cody, a Yale-educated world traveler and freelance writer from Estacada. His books include "Ricochet River" (1990) and "Voyage of a Summer Sun" (1992). Also, Oregon Humanities speaker Jason Graham will serve as the closing keynote speaker. Born in Chicago, he is now an Oregon-based performer, artist and educator, and is a former slam poetry champion for Oregon.

The event offers writing workshops from regional authors, including David Axelrod, Jodi Varon and Scott Elliott. Also, an author showcase provides visitors with an opportunity to meet the authors and learn more about their works. An open mic/happy hour runs from 5-6 p.m.

For more information, contact Casey White-Zollman at 541-278-5839, cwhitezollman@bluecc.edu or visit www.bluecc.edu.

Spring Fling offers outdoor fun

STANFIELD — More than 30 vendors have confirmed for Spring Fling In Old Town Stanfield.

The event is Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on West Coe Street, Stanfield. There is no admission charge. Bring an appetite, as in addition to the vendor booths, there will be food trucks.

For more information, call Kathy Baker at 541-571-6388, Lynne Hamblin at 541-571-5691 or search Facebook.

Open Air Market in Echo returns to George Park

ECHO — Spring is in the air and that means the Echo Open Air Market is once again starting up.

The first market of the season is Saturday from 4-7 p.m. at George Park, located at Bonanza and Dupont streets. Dozens of vendors will offer everything from local farm produced goods and direct sales merchandise to handcrafted items and artwork. There is no admission fee.

The event is held the third Saturday of each month through October. For more information or to inquire about becoming a vendor, contact echoopenairmarket@gmail.com or search Facebook.

Dance team collects cans, bottles

PENDLETON — People are encouraged to donate their cans and bottles to the Rhythmic Mode Dance Team.

Members of Pendleton High School's award-winning team will collect donations Saturday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Roy Raley Park, 1205 S.W. Court Ave., Pendleton.

For more information, contact rhythmicmode@gmail.com.

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