

SAFETY: Lifeguard work is preventative

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guards go through," recreation supervisor Brandon Artz said. "They get to shadow some too. It's a good opportunity to learn."

On Monday morning the junior lifeguard class was treading water in the lap swim pool, passing a 10-pound brick between them with encouragement from instructor Britin Braithwaite as some students struggled not to sink.

Afterward, she said it was important for lifeguards to build endurance and mental toughness so she tried to push her students to keep going even when they said they were too tired. The HFAC's real lifeguards have to swim nonstop for one hour each week during their inservice days.

Braithwaite said much of the work the staff at the aquatic center does is preventative, from teaching water skills to asking kids not to run next to the pool.

"People think lifeguards save people from drowning, but really we're preventing



Mekena Royer talks to her level 1 swim class before taking to the pool Monday at the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

drownings," she said.

Alysia Garcia, 19, teaches all levels of swim lessons at the HFAC. This is her third year.

"I like working with kids because it gives me practice," she said. "I want to be a teacher."

She said most of her lessons are focused on helping kids be safe in the water, so that if they get caught in a current at the beach or venture too far out and get tired they can get to safety or at

least stay afloat until they are rescued.

Pendleton Family Aquatic Center also offers a variety of swim lessons to several hundred students of varying levels, and adults can sign up for private lessons. Swim instruction coordinator Mary Wells said there are still open spots and encouraged people to sign their children up if they haven't already.

"It's a safety issue," she said. "You want your kids to

be safe."

Wells said when people reach adulthood without knowing how to swim it can negatively impact their lives, especially in the summer when they are getting invited to go boating, fishing, rafting, or to spend time on the beach.

"Not only can it cause you to be unsafe, and the people around you to be less safe, it also limits your activities," she said.

She said the aquatic center and all it offers — including multiple levels of swim instruction — is an "amazing" resource for the community that people should not take for granted.

For more information about Pendleton Family Aquatic Center call 541-276-0104 or visit <http://www.pendletonparksandrec.com/aquatic-center>. For more information about the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center call 541-289-7665 or visit hermistonpool.com.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

WATER: Ratepayers won't have to cover cost

Continued from 1A

solve utility problems on their own.

A subsequent public meeting with the representative from the Greater Eastern Oregon Regional Solutions Team to address council concerns devolved into bickering as the council criticized the park for its code enforcement issues.

In a much more mild environment, the council didn't spend much time debating the Business Oregon grant at Monday's meeting and none of the audience members spoke out against it.

Hall stressed the grant meant ratepayers and citizens wouldn't have to pay for the cost of extending water to the trailer park.

Although the council unanimously authorized the grant, Councilor Brad Humbert had some parting words on the issue.

"I just want to thank Linda and staff for not folding or buckling to the county commissioners when they didn't stand up for the city," he said. "And not buckling to the state (for) the disaster that no one will enforce their code over. It's not in the city limits. It's not necessarily our problem, but we seem to have to clean up others' messes."

The council also approved a \$34 million budget for the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Balancing the budget required a few corresponding moves, including:

- The council agreed to raise golf course rates 3 percent, but exempted student daily greens fees, student punch cards, golf cart barn rentals and season passes from the increase. The council also had the option of instituting an across-the-board rate increase, but the Mil-

"It's not necessarily our problem, but we seem to have to clean up others' messes."

— Brad Humbert, City Councilor

ton-Freewater Golf Board recommended the more targeted raise.

The council voted 4-1 to raise the rates, with Humbert voting against.

Humbert said the golf course does a lot of good for the community through charity golf tournaments, but continual rate increases could eventually decrease patronage from out-of-town golfers.

- The council unanimously voted to increase electrical rates 3 percent and raise the service availability fee for commercial and industrial customers.

Electric superintendent Rick Rambo reported the 3 percent rate increase was necessitated by the city's power supplier, Bonneville Power Administration, raising its rates 5 percent in October.

Hall said the 3 percent rate increase was a requirement of balancing the budget, but the council had more "wiggle room" in the availability fees.

Currently \$15 for both commercial and industrial, staff recommended raising the commercial fee to \$25 and the industrial fee to \$50.

Concerned by the large jumps in price, Councilor Verl Pressnall suggested raising commercial to \$20 and industrial to \$30.

The council incorporated Pressnall's recommendation into the motion and unanimously passed the fee increases.

RETAIL: Albertsons building too big for rodeo's needs

Continued from 1A

their smart phones as tickets, consolidating administrative offices and ticketing under one roof is meant to streamline the operation.

Thomas said the Round-Up is one of the few rodeos with a year-round retail operation that exceeds larger rodeos in Denver and San Antonio.

With sales up 5 percent from last year, the new building's storage space is meant to accommodate the Round-Up's growing online retail sector.

The planned location of the building is in the northeast corner of the parking lot, directly across from the Hall of Fame to the east and the bucking horse statue to the north.

The new building's location means the vacant Albertsons will be demolished over the summer.

O'Neill anticipates the Round-Up will field complaints that it didn't repurpose the building instead of demolishing it. While the Round-Up explored using Albertsons for its own ends, O'Neill said the size of the building meant the Round-Up would have to lease part of it to another entity to make that feasible, a move that wouldn't play to the Round-Up's strengths.

Thomas added that renovating the building would have been a long-term, multiphase project while a new building accomplished the Round-Up's goals more quickly and efficiently.

The demolition is also

expected to create addition by subtraction — more parking spots.

"In our reality, (parking) is our biggest nemesis," O'Neill said.

Round-Up officials expect to have the Albertsons building cleared away by Round-Up week so they can open up the parking lot to rodeo fans.

Construction on the project will cease for the rodeo and resume afterwards, although the Round-Up didn't provide an exact timeline for the new facility.

As for its other expansion projects — an indoor arena and classroom space for Blue Mountain Community College and several properties bought west of Southwest 18th Street — O'Neill said there weren't many

updates to provide.

A long-range facility planning committee continues to look at what to do with the western properties and the Round-Up remains supportive of BMCC's efforts.

The Round-Up is also making its own efforts to keep stockholders abreast of their plans, after receiving previous complaints that the Round-Up Board of Directors wasn't being transparent with them. O'Neill said all stockholders were sent letters Monday and Tuesday informing them of the project.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

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