

PENDLETON

# Medallions get OK for vets memorial

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

Pendleton is one step closer to getting an official veterans memorial.

The Pendleton City Council approved the \$3,310 purchase of five bronze medallions for a memorial sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Let'Er Buck Post 922.

Charles Denight, chairman of the arts commission, explained that the VFW had already done much of the legwork on the proposed memorial at the old fountain space near the intersection of Highway 11 and Southeast Court Avenue.

The 16-inch medallions, one for each branch of the military, will be mounted on basalt columns that have already been purchased by the VFW. Denight said the VFW has also worked with the Pendleton Parks and Recreation Department to clean the site and prepare it for the memorial.

Although the columns and medallions will be installed soon, the project is far from over.

Denight said the columns will be installed in a circular formation in anticipation of placing a centerpiece of art to complete the memorial.

He said the VFW is still developing a concept or theme for the art, but Denight said the organization wants to keep it intentionally open-ended to give artists leeway in their interpretations when it sends out a request for proposal.

The cost of the medallions comes from the city's



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The Pendleton City Council approved the purchase of five bronze medallions for a memorial sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Let'Er Buck Post 922.

art fund, which is funded by an earmark from the transient room tax.

Also closer to reality is a new fixed-route service from Pendleton's transportation program.

The council approved two Oregon Department of Transportation grants that will help establish the new service and pay for a new 22-passenger bus.

Finance Director Linda Carter said Pendleton already has several curb-to-curb transportation programs.

But as the program's popularity continues to rise, Carter said the city wants to direct more riders to its new deviated fixed-route service, which will run on a fixed route across town while allowing for slight deviations if someone with a disability needs transportation.

The city is planning a \$1 fare, but Carter said she is going to apply for money from the Oregon Special Transportation Fund that could help turn it into a free program.

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The ODOT transportation operations grant is for \$144,000 and requires a \$36,000 match from the city over two years, while the

bus grant is \$76,500 with a \$13,500 match.

The transportation program will continue to be operated by Elite Taxi, which received a \$638,925 contract from the city at the same meeting.

Before the council meeting, the council met with the Pendleton Development Commission and passed a \$2.2 million budget for the urban renewal district.

The 2018-2019 budget is almost \$1 million more than the previous fiscal year and includes large increases for programs like Fresh Start, second story access, and facade restoration.

Contact Antonio Sierra at [asierra@eastoregonian.com](mailto:asierra@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0836.

# Counties prepare plans for railroad emergencies

SALEM — Morrow, Umatilla and Polk counties are the first in Oregon to complete local emergency response plans for crashes and accidents of trains hauling hazardous materials.

The Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal coordinates emergency response planning for oil or hazardous materials spills or releases during rail transport. The

state agency reported it recently worked with the counties to complete the plans, which identify local rail lines that transport hazardous materials and outline emergency notification and response procedures. The plans also include information on the frequency of hazardous material transports, emergency response procedures and evacuation routes.

Local emergency planning committees and county emergency managers helped create the plans. First responders, tribal representatives, railroad operators and more also gave input, according to the fire marshal office, to ensure a "whole community" approach to planning and response.

Rail carries roughly 40 percent of all hazard-

ous material in the United States, according to the fire marshal office. The over-

all goal of the plans was to develop the framework for a safe, effective and efficient response to a rail emergency involving hazardous materials. Oregon State Fire Marshal Jim Walker applauded the communities for taking preventative action and preparing for an emergency.

PENDLETON

# Banks takes up baton with youth program

East Oregonian

The Oregon East Symphony recently announced that Zach Banks has been hired to its newly-created strings instructor position.

Banks will conduct the A Sharp Players intermediate preparatory orchestra and the Raising the Bar mentoring program, where advanced level high school string players perform as members of the Oregon East Symphony. In addition, he will teach cello in the Symphony Strings program, which provides after-school beginning strings instruction for Pendleton area fourth and fifth grade students.

The program is produced in collaboration with the Pendleton School District. His position also has a reserved amount of pilot program development hours, which the symphony can produce new educational offerings in the surrounding region.

A recent graduate of Portland State University, Banks received a master's degree in cello performance. He has served as acting principal cellist in the Oregon East Symphony and been a section cellist with Port-



Contributed photo

Zach Banks serves as a stand partner alongside a young musician during an Oregon East Symphony rehearsal. Banks has been hired in the symphony's newly-created strings instructor position.

land Columbia Symphony Orchestra, ARCO PDX, Portland State University Symphony, Northwest Indiana Youth Symphony and United States Youth Ensemble on their 2007 European tour. As a music educator, Banks has been a music theory instructor with the Portland Youth Philharmonic

and Metropolitan Youth Symphony and an instructor at the OES Summer Strings Music Camp. Outside the realm of classical music, Banks has shared the stage with pop music performers Nick Jaina, Stelth Ulvang (of The Lumineers) and Father John Misty.

In addition to his work

with the OES, Banks recently accepted the position of conductor for the Grande Ronde Symphony Orchestra in La Grande. He also will maintain a private music instruction studio in Pendleton focusing on all levels of cello and beginner level violin instruction.

Accompanying Banks to Pendleton is his partner, violinist Viet Block. She graduated from PSU with a master's of music in violin performance and is a first section member with Oregon East Symphony.

Block will offer private lessons for all levels of violin instruction. Also, Banks and Block have expressed interest in serving as musical resources for ceremonies such as weddings, funerals and more.

A nonprofit organization, the Oregon East Symphony's mission is to operate, support and maintain a symphony orchestra, ensembles, chorale and youth classical music program to enhance the cultural wealth of the region through education and performance. For more information, contact [oesdirectors@gmail.com](mailto:oesdirectors@gmail.com), 541-276-0320 or visit [www.oregoneastsymphony.org](http://www.oregoneastsymphony.org).

# Umatilla County seeks to give data center fee to taxing districts

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

The Umatilla County Fire District and five other special tax districts are in line for a budget boost, thanks to data center revenue.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners during its public meeting Wednesday in Pendleton voted 3-0 to forgo any of the \$500,000 community service fee from the Amazon subsidiary Vadata Inc. and distribute its share to six special districts as follows:

- 64 percent to the Umatilla County Fire District;
- 13.5 percent to the Umatilla Special Library District;
- 7.4 percent to the West Umatilla Mosquito Control District;
- 6.2 percent to the Umatilla-Morrow Radio District;
- 5.6 percent to the Port of Umatilla;
- 3.4 percent to the Hermiston Cemetery District.

The fee is part of Vadata's deal with the county to avoid paying property taxes on massive data centers spanning two tax code areas, one inside the city of Umatilla in another outside in the county taxing district. The county anticipates Vadata will start paying the fee in 2019.

County counsel Doug Olsen said the special districts in the two tax code areas met often to decide how to divvy up the fee and agreed to split it equally between the two areas, with each district then receiving its share based on its property tax rate.

Olsen said the Oregon Business Development Commission has final approval and could consider the plan when it meets in July. He also said the commission will probably consider an earlier proposal to divide the fee according to what area is likely to have the most development.

Commissioner George Murdock asked if the city of Umatilla was involved in the talks. The city initially promoted the idea of the county helping out the

districts, he said.

Olsen said the city wanted to "put everyone in the same pool and then divide up the \$500,000," but Oregon law requires dividing the fees according to tax code areas.

"Since the city was unwilling to change that approach ... they were not included in the formal discussions," Olsen said.

"I guess it makes it sound as if the city of Umatilla doesn't want to follow statute," Commissioner Larry Givens said. "Is that a good way of summarizing that?"

Olsen answered, "Yes." No one from the city of Umatilla attended the meeting.

The board also voted 3-0 to not renew their membership with the Eastern Oregon Counties Association.

Commissioner Bill Elfering said the association primarily takes on forestry and grazing issues, which don't have much effect on Umatilla County.

"I don't see we're getting our value out of the relationship," Elfering said.

Murdock said "we do look different" from the other counties in Eastern Oregon with the nature of agriculture, the data centers, manufacturing and more. And Oregon senators, the National Association of Counties and others advocate for the federal subsidy program Payment in Lieu of Taxes, which amounts to about \$1 million a year to Umatilla County.

The county must give 90 days notice of its withdrawal to the other nine counties in the association.

In other business, the county will form its own committee to oversee a special transportation improvement fund program.

Umatilla and Morrow counties in March decided to have staff look into forming a joint special transportation committee with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, which operates the regional bus system Kayak Public Transit.

# Mutt Strut benefits pet therapy, PAWS

PENDLETON — People and their pets are invited to help raise money for the St. Anthony Hospital alternative therapy program, and the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter.

The St. Anthony Mutt Strut features a 5K fun run/walk. People without four-legged friends are also welcome. The event is Saturday at 8:30 a.m. at Roy Raley Park, 1205 N.W. Court Ave., Pendleton.

Cost is \$25. For more information, contact Emily Smith at 541-278-2627.

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