

PENDLETON

# Fritsch gets first-year praise from board

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

According to Chris Fritsch's first two evaluations, the Pendleton School Board is largely satisfied with his performance and extended his contract to 2020.

"Overall: The Board recognizes that our district has a lot going on this year, and a lot that is going right," the mid-year evaluation states.

Both evaluations are on a scale of adjectives from lowest to highest: "developing," "basic," "accomplished," and "distinguished."

Fritsch earned across-the-board "accomplished" scores in his mid-year evaluation. With the exception of one "distinguished" and one "basic," it was the same story for the one-year evaluation.

The board exalted Fritsch in both evaluations, noting his efforts to boost morale throughout the district, his "reassuring confidence," and his willingness to talk to and participate in community groups.

He also received praise for working with principals to collect data and present their results to the board.

The board did encourage Fritsch to work on school safety and deepen his rela-

tionship with the Pendleton Police Department and the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office.

In an interview, board Chairwoman Lynn Lieuallen said the statement was meant less as criticism and more as a reminder that school safety coordination was an expectation of the job.

In the following evaluation, the board gave him plaudits for communicating regularly with Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts to develop "strategies for school safety."

Fritsch said in an interview that he put a concerted effort into improving his school safety skills and he feels like he has a good relationship with Roberts.

In his one-year evaluation, the board commended him for his "ethical manner" and integrity, rating him as "distinguished."

Fritsch's worst score was a "basic" for his ability to collaborate with family and community members.

Fritsch admitted he needed to work on his communication to those groups, but Lieuallen said it was a comment on the structure of the district hierarchy rather than a direct criticism of Fritsch's performance.

In a different section of



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Pendleton School District Superintendent Chris Fritsch looks in on a sixth-grade math class while touring Sunridge Middle School on the first day of school in 2017 in Pendleton.

the evaluation, the board wanted Fritsch to work with the InterMountain Education Service District "and your administrators to alleviate some of the HR responsibilities that the configuration of the central office has required you to take on this past year."

Lieuallen added that all the hats Fritsch was forced to wear left him little time to reach out to all of his constituencies.

The district hasn't had an assistant superintendent since 2016 when Tricia Mooney left for the Hermiston School District, and when Human Resources Director Brad Bixler was laid off last year the district chose to leave the position unfilled.

Lieuallen said the district has considered recreating one of those administrative positions or reassigning some of Fritsch's duties to an

existing administrator, but there's a significant obstacle.

"It's just a matter of where the money is going to be," she said.

Although Fritsch received his lowest mark for his collaboration with community members, some intense community scrutiny was not a part of the assessment.

At two separate board meetings, people turned out for the public comment section to criticize the district

over the departures of former Pendleton High School Principal Dan Greenough and high school agriculture teacher Seely Daniels.

For her part, Daniels blamed Fritsch for forcing her out.

Lieuallen said those two events were not considered as a part of the superintendent evaluation and Fritsch said it wasn't mentioned to him during the evaluation process.

With some assurance that the superintendent position will be stable for the next two years, the district is starting to put some distance between itself and the tumultuous 2016-2017 school year.

During former Superintendent Andy Kovach's 10-month tenure, the board talked to him about his performance three times behind closed doors. In the only written evaluation, he scored poorly.

Fritsch will enter the 2018-2019 school year with a slight pay bump.

Along with all other district staff, Fritsch will receive a 2 percent cost-of-living raise, increasing his annual salary to \$138,216.

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HERMISTON

## Larson bids farewell to fire district

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN  
East Oregonian

Reta Larson marked the last day of a 31-year career doing what she's always done — working.

Often the first face people see when they walk into the UCFD Station 21 office, Larson has kept the department running as executive assistant and board clerk. Larson Wednesday was her last day.

"I should have ripped up her resignation letter," said fire chief Scott Stanton with a smile. "She's been like my right-hand person. It's crystal clear how integral she is to the department."

Larson will stay on as the UCFD board clerk, Stanton said.

Originally from Rexburg, Idaho, Larson and her husband moved to Hermiston in 1986 for his job. When the job didn't work out, the two found themselves unemployed, so Larson started looking for a job. She initially applied next door, as a dispatcher for the police department.

"The chief called me and said, 'You didn't get the job, but the job you really want is next door.' They sent my application over, and they hadn't even opened this job yet," Larson said.

She started out with tasks like filing and correspondence, eventually moving into ambulance billing. Her role has evolved over time into a more managerial position.

The longest-serving full-time employee for the department, Larson has seen four fire chiefs, and some major changes to the way fire services operate in the area.



Larson

"I got hired back when the fire district was still part of the city of Hermiston," she said. The department separated from the city in 1998, and in 2016, passed a bond that allowed for the creation of Umatilla County Fire District 1.

She said being present for the first transition in 1998 made it easier when the district was trying to pass the bond.

"We learned from that transition," she said. "Some things I knew that didn't go so well from that helped us be ahead of the game this time around."

Stanton cited Larson's years of background with the department.

"The amount of experience and institutional knowledge she has — that's the part that will be irreplaceable," he said.

She said throughout her time with the department money has continued to be the biggest challenge.

"That's always the challenge with fire departments — you're always too busy for the workload with the personnel you have."

But she said she has been impressed with the way the department is able to do its job efficiently, and praised the people she works with.

"It's been an awesome 31 years," she said.

UMATILLA

## Manager's resignation, data centers on council's agenda

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

The Umatilla City Council will discuss agreements for revenue from Vadata Inc. and the resignation of City Manager Russ Pelleberg during its meeting Tuesday.

After Pelleberg announced earlier this week he was leaving the city in July for a city administrator job in Washington, the council had an emergency meeting Thursday night. Most of it was a closed-door executive session, but afterward the council voted to approve the hiring of a recruitment firm for a nationwide search. They also asked the city recorder to add the naming of an interim city manager to Tuesday's agenda, as well as a discussion of compensation and a letter of thanks and congratulations to Pelleberg.

Already on Tuesday's agenda was a resolution authorizing the mayor to sign an extended five-year enterprise zone agreement with Vadata, a subsidiary of Amazon. Enterprise zones allow cities to give property tax breaks to companies for new development that meets certain requirements for job creation.

According to a memo from Pelleberg to the council, the agreement in ques-

tion includes a payment in year four equal to 50 percent of what would have been paid in taxes, and a 75 percent payment in year five. He wrote that it should have been signed in 2017 but there was an oversight.

The agenda also includes a resolution in support of the community service fee distribution formula approved by Umatilla County recently for two Vadata projects in Umatilla city limits and a third outside of Hermiston. The county negotiated a Strategic Investment Program (SIP) agreement with Vadata that includes three types of payments in lieu of regular property taxes for the next 15 years. Under state statute, the first \$25 million in real market value is distributed to taxing districts at the normal rate. A flat community service fee of 25 percent (not to exceed \$500,000 per year) is also assessed, to be divided between the districts by agreement. Additional "annual improvement payments" from the company can also be negotiated as desired.

The county voted on June 20 to forgo its own share of the \$500,000 community service fee and divide the fee among six special taxing districts, including 64 percent to Umatilla County Fire District

1. Pelleberg wrote in a memo that "Ultimately, the County has approved a formula for distribution of the CSF that has been sent to the Oregon Business Commission without our involvement and has indicated that the other spe-

cial districts are in agreement. Staff has reviewed the formula and recommends that the Council approves this resolution in support of adoption by the Oregon Business Commission at its July 13th meeting."

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**Cineplex Show Times**

\$5 Classic Movie • 7/4 • 12:00 PM  
**Independence Day**

\$5 Children's Classic Movie • 7/4 • 10 AM  
**Happy Feet**  
Free Small Popcorn & Small Soda

**JURASSIC WORLD: FALLEN KINGDOM (PG13)**  
1:00\* 3:30\* 6:30 7:00 9:30  
\$D 4:00 10:00

**SICARIO: DAY OF THE SOLDADO (R)**  
1:10\* 3:50\* 6:40 9:20

**INCREDIBLES 2 (PG)**  
12:50\* 1:20\* 6:50  
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**OCEANS 8 (PG13)**  
2:20\* 7:20

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**Echo All School/  
All Community Reunion**

**Friday July 6, 2018**  
Meet & greet at Sno Road Winery,  
Main Street 5:30-10 PM

**Saturday, July 7, 2018**  
Registration begins at Noon at City Park  
**Tours:** Catholic Church 11:00 AM • New School 2:00 PM  
Museum 1:00-4:00 PM  
Tri-Tip Dinner at 5:00 PM- \$30.00 per person  
\*Price includes dinner, music, and other reunion expenses  
Dance at Echo Ridge Cellars 8-10:30 PM

Contacts:  
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Darrylin Collinsworth, 541-449-1138  
Diane Schultze, 541-376-5505

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**GOLF TOURNAMENT**

**GOLFING FOR A CAUSE**  
**SATURDAY, JULY 15, 2017**  
**BIG RIVER GOLF COURSE**

**AGAPE HOUSE** **SCRAMBLE FOR FOOD**

**\$60.00 ENTRY FEE:**  
**PRIZES ON EVERY HOLE!**

Includes greens fee for 18 holes, pastries before & lunch after the tournament

**OPEN TO MEN & WOMEN  
OF ALL SKILL LEVELS**

**Four person Scramble • Limited to first 120 golfers**

**8:00am: Check-in opens.**  
**Teams & hole assignments announced.**  
**9:00am: Shot gun start**  
**Conclusion of tournament: Lunch, awards ceremony**

Please contact Big River Golf Course to reserve a cart at 541-922-3006.  
(carts are not included in the entry fee)

**For more information, contact Dave Hughes at 541-571-7293.**

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