

PENDLETON

High and dry river development plan frustrates

\$100,000 incentive has gone untouched since 2010

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

For the past several months, Ed Miltenberger and a group of fellow Court Avenue business owners have been going to Pendleton City Council and Pendleton Planning Commission meetings to complain about the lack of action on the Pendleton River Quarter.

The council didn't take any action Tuesday, but some members started to publicly share Miltenberger's frustration over a lack of movement on the issue.

The 2010 River Quarter Enhancement Plan, which covers Court Avenue from Southwest First Street to Southwest 10th, uses land use laws to encourage multi-story apartments, retail stores and restaurants along the Umatilla River.

Despite a \$100,000 incentive to build in the river quarter, a lack of new development prompted an advisory committee to recommend

scrapping the plan in 2015 and starting over.

The council instead decided to revise the plan instead of repealing it, but little has changed in the ensuing three years.

Miltenberger, who owns Sign Men, has long opposed the plan and thinks it's stifling new business.

"The river quarter is probably a great name for it," he said. "But other than that, it's a big boondoggle that was probably brought up by people who did not want to participate with me from the very beginning."

Some councilors echoed Miltenberger's frustration with the drawn-out process.

"We've got a real mess and it's because people's issues are not being addressed," Councilor Becky Marks said.

Councilor Dale Primmer echoed her comments.

"It drives me nuts to listen to what a bureaucratic process it takes to make changes. You have people who want to develop and use their property. They put it on hold waiting for some policies or some description of what they can and can't do



EO file photo

The city of Pendleton adopted the River Quarter Plan to develop properties on the north side of Court Avenue between downtown and the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds. To date, no new development in the River Quarter zone has broken ground.

and God knows how long it's gonna take to get."

Councilor Paul Chalmers said the river quarter plan was impeding development and any changes to it needed to be approached with a sense of urgency.

"Whatever we have to do expedite this, we owe that to our citizenry to make sure it happens as quickly as possible," he said. "Three years is too long in my book."

City planner George

Cress said the commission had recently reviewed the plan and had a number of suggested changes. He added that staff is in the process of turning those verbal suggestions into a document.

Before the plan is adopted by the planning commission and council, Cress said Miltenberger and the other Court Avenue entrepreneurs could participate in public hearings to solicit their opinions.

The council may not have taken action on the river quarter, but there were several other issues they did take action on.

The council unanimously approved a \$7.7 million construction cost for the new fire station.

Adding consultant and owner fees, the city is currently committed to spending \$9,429,487 for the total project, only \$2 over the station budget set in August

2016. Public Works Director Bob Patterson said the staying within budget should allow the city to purchase a new fire engine for the department.

The council also approved a \$9.8 million loan from the state's Clean Water State Revolving Fund.

The loan will cost the city \$602,000 per year for 20 years and will pay for it using recent sewer rate hikes, and the money will be used for sewer projects identified in the city's master plan.

The council passed an ordinance that adds new penalties to the transient room tax and change its name to the Lodging Room Tax.

The 8 percent tax is collected from hotels and helps pay for the Pendleton Convention Center's budget.

City Attorney Nancy Kerns said the tax will be expanded to cover vacation rentals like Airbnb and allow the city to charge hoteliers if they fail to pay the tax.

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

PENDLETON

National Night Out parties expand around town, at least 10

Ten party packs distributed by police department

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Pendleton used to have one event for National Night Out.

This year there will be at least 10.

The Pendleton Police Department in years past hosted a community-wide party at Roy Raley Park or the aquatic center for National Night Out. Free hot dogs and ice cream floats enticed plenty of turnout but did not necessarily foster National Night Out's get-to-know-your-neighbor principal. Jesse Leachman said tapping into that is why he was one of the 10 who registered to host gatherings. He signed up for Roy Raley Park, just down the street from his home.

"I love giving back to the community with events like this," Leachman said, plus this provides a fun way to bring together law enforcement and Pendleton residents.

Leachman is the owner of the notorious "Zombie Outbreak Response Team" car. He said he will have it at the party. If you're not sure where to go, he said, just look for the flashing green lights.

Shelly Studebaker is the police department's community services officer and coordinated the revision for National Night Out, which takes place Aug. 7. She reported the people who registered receive a "party pack" that includes hot dogs, buns and more, all from local vendors. She said the 10 gatherings, which run 6-8 p.m., have an estimated attendance of nearly 800 residents and are throughout the town:

- Aldrich Park neighborhood
- Kiwanis Park neighborhood
- May Park neighborhood



EO file photo

Lexi Bowen and Aubrey Lehnert prepare snow cones during Pendleton's National Night Out event in 2017.

- Roy Raley Park neighborhood
- Vincent Park neighborhood

- 100 block of Southeast Seventh Street neighborhood
- 1400 block Southwest 44th Street neighborhood

- 1800 block Southwest 18th Street neighborhood
- 3100 block Southwest Marshall Avenue neighborhood

- Vista Village residents

"Each of these gatherings is hosted by folks who live in the individual areas," Studebaker stated in an email. "If community members live in one of these areas and wish to participate in their neighborhood gathering, I would ask that they network with their neighbors for information specific to their neighborhood or email PPD at NationalNightOut@ci.pendleton.or.us and I can provide contact information."

City police and the public library also are holding a Facebook Live event to draw from one of these locations for the library's "Campfire Stories" presentation. And Studebaker said the NNO coloring contest for children is accepting entries through Aug. 1. For more information about the contest, email NationalNightOut@ci.pendleton.or.us.

Studebaker explained the deadline passed to get a party pack, but locals still can coordinate with the police department to host a party, which includes police officer or fire department personnel visiting the gathering and assisting with street closures for traditional block parties.

Leachman said the Roy Raley party is open to the public, and he encouraged anyone who comes to bring activities for others to enjoy. He said he received positive feedback about the event, and people are looking forward to "that community time again." Some folks, however, were unaware of National Night Out, so this is an opportunity for them to learn more.

"It's just get to know your neighbors, get to know your law enforcement and emergency providers," he said, "and build a sense of community. In a time when everybody is so divided politically, it's nice to have something we all can come together on."

For more information, check out the Pendleton Police Department's National Night Out webpage, ppd.pendleton.or.us/national-night-out, or email NationalNightOut@ci.pendleton.or.us.

Health advisory issued for Willow Creek Reservoir

East Oregonian

Residents are advised to avoid Willow Creek Reservoir in Morrow County as the water has been found to have high levels of toxins harmful to humans and animals.

The Oregon Health Authority has issued a recreational health advisory for the reservoir, just east of Heppner, stating there are high levels of cyanobacteria, a harmful algae bloom, which can cause dizziness, numbness and tingling, and can lead to breathing difficulty and heart problems. The toxin is especially harmful to children and pets.

Those who get water directly from Wil-

low Creek Reservoir are advised to use an alternate water source, as drinking water from the reservoir is dangerous, and toxins cannot be removed by boiling, filtering or treating the water with camping-style filters.

According to OHA, those planning to eat fish caught in water with cyanobacteria blooms should remove all fat, skin and organs before consuming them, as toxins are more likely to collect in those tissues.

People are advised to avoid swimming, water skiing and power boating in affected areas. Boating is safe, as long as it does not create water spray, which can put people and pets at risk of inhaling the water.

BRIEFLY

Wilson Prairie Fire grows, community meeting planned

HEPPNER — A community meeting has been scheduled in Heppner to update the public about the Wilson Prairie Fire after it grew to 437 acres Thursday morning.

The fire is burning through timber and grass on private land and the Umatilla National Forest in south Morrow County approximately 23 miles south of Heppner. It was considered 10 percent contained on Thursday.

Fire managers will be available to provide updates and answer questions Friday at 5 p.m. at Heppner City Hall, 111 North Main Street.

According to an update provided by the U.S. Forest Service, resources on the fire include 275 personnel, three helicopters, four bulldozers, 12 engines and four water tenders.

A temporary flight restriction is in place over the fire area, making flight (manned and unmanned) over the area illegal. All air operations must be halted any time a drone is seen over the TRF area, which would hinder fire suppression efforts.

Trails, roads and forestland in the Bull Prairie Lake and Wilson Prairie areas are closed, including several forest roads intersecting with Highway 207. A map is

available at any Umatilla National Forest Office and online at inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/6028.

The fire is under investigation and suspected to be human-caused, according to the Forest Service.

Man accidentally stabs self while cutting vegetables

HERMISTON — Hermiston Police responded to reports of a man with a stab wound Wednesday evening and found a man with an unintentional, self-inflicted injury. According to police chief Jason Edmiston, a 50-year-old male was cutting vegetables and stabbed himself in the abdomen. He said when the police were notified, the wound was two hours old.

"The family tried to provide necessary first aid, but after a couple of hours it became clear he needed immediate attention," Edmiston said.

He said the man was taken to the hospital, but, against advice, left on his own. Edmiston said that based on statements and evidence, police believe alcohol may have been a contributing factor in the incident.

"What appeared to start as a police matter quickly turned into a medical issue," Edmiston said.

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THE EQUALIZER 2 (R)
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