

**FROM MUTTON BUSTIN' TO CHUTE 8,  
YOUR GUIDE TO THE FARM-CITY PRO RODEO  
INSIDE TODAY**



# EAST OREGONIAN

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One dollar

## BPA pulls back on 14-hour blackout plan

Substation in Wheeler County needs upgrade, requires outages

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

Wheeler County residents pushed the Bonneville Power Administration to unplug its plan to temporarily cut their power this summer.

More than 1,300 people live in the Eastern Oregon county, most in the towns of Fossil, Mitchell and Spray. The federal power marketing agency provides electricity

to two local co-operatives: Columbia Basin Electric, which sells power to Fossil area customers, and Columbia Power, which has customers in Spray and Mitchell. The BPA planned to shut off the juice to the county on Fridays from 7 p.m. to Saturdays at 9 a.m. starting July 27 so it could make upgrades to its electrical substation near Fossil.

Roberta Vandehey of Fossil led the effort to get BPA to back off that plan. She said most residents there found out about the

outages when their power bills arrived July 20.

“On Monday, everybody had to start really, really putting on pressure to get that one on Friday stopped,” she said.

Vandehey said she sent letters to six newspapers, including the *East Oregonian*, about the BPA’s plan. She said she spent an hour-and-a-half on the phone with BPA spokesperson John Tyler and sent him the letter. She asked business owners in Wheeler County to call the BPA to explain how damaging the blackouts would be and urged them to bill

the agency for any loss of income.

Joe McNeill owns and operates the Fossil Mercantile Company, the lone grocery store in Fossil. He said he made one of those calls.

“I’ve got four freezers and I don’t have a generator,” he said. “And 14-hour blackouts — that’s going to be hard. And the next call I made was to my insurance to see what kind of coverage I had.”

McNeill said his plan was to pack everything in as much dry ice as a possible to pre-

See BPA/8A

## Smoke and sunlight



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The sun drops below some clouds as it casts a red hue on the evening sky Tuesday in Pendleton. Smoke particles in the air from area wildfires causes the sunset to be red by allowing sunlight’s longer wavelength colors like red and orange to get through while blocking the shorter wavelength colors of yellow, blue and green.

### PENDLETON

## Cooling station opens during scorching heat

Homeless vulnerable to heat exhaustion and dehydration

By KATHY ANEY  
East Oregonian

The Pendleton Warming Station changed its middle name this week, at least informally.

The warming station operates as an oasis to the homeless on frosty winter nights. But as triple-digit temperatures arrived this week, the shelter doubled as a cooling station.

Heat waves are particularly dangerous for homeless people. They often lack water, sunscreen and shade and already may suffer from health problems that are exacerbated by the scorching heat. Dehydration and heat exhaustion are a risk to those who often don’t have access to air conditioning.

Back in the early days of Neighbor 2 Neighbor, the nonprofit that oversees the warming station, a day center operated in the basement of the United Methodist Church on the most frigid nights of winter and hottest days of summer. Rev. Sandra Kimbrow, pastor at the Methodist church at the time, started the day center and monitored it. When Kimbrow moved away from Pendleton, the day center fizzled because of a shortage of volunteers.

Recently, the organization’s board toyed with the idea of re-starting a daytime cooling station, now that the organization has matured and refined its purpose. The mission, Neighbor 2 Neighbor Executive Director Dwight Johnson said, is basically to get people off the streets in dangerous weather.

“Since we had a heat advisory, we thought this would be a good time for a trial run,” Johnson said.

It was a last-minute decision, he said, made the day before after securing enough volunteers. The word went out on the organization’s website and by word of mouth. Open from 1-5 p.m., it would provide a respite during some of the hottest hours of the day. By 2 p.m., seven people had wandered into the building at 715 S.E. Court Ave. Outside the temperature neared the day’s high of 103 degrees.

Zachary Chase sat in the air conditioning,

See COOLING/8A

### PENDLETON

## Councilor proposes fix to unsustainable budget

Fairley’s plan to stop ‘kicking can down the road’ on maintenance

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

Frustrated by a lack of action on growing maintenance costs in the past two city budgets, Pendleton City Councilor Scott Fairley is proposing his own plan.

Presented at a city council workshop Monday, Fairley’s plan includes a timeline that would put Pendleton on a path toward addressing its \$30 million maintenance



Fairley

backlog and balancing the gap between revenue and expenses by 2020.

At the heart of the problem, according to Fairley’s report, is that property tax increases are capped at 3 percent while the cost of operating the city rises by 4 to 6 percent each year.

“Rather than cut services to address this gap, the city has been funding services the community desires, such as public safety and parks and recreation, by deferring

maintenance on publicly owned city assets including roads, buildings, and parks,” he wrote. “This means that as a community, we are not paying the full cost for the services we use — we are enjoying public assets paid for by previous generations but passing the cost of maintaining and replacing those assets on to future generations.”

In an interview after the meeting, Fairley said the plan revolves around the services paid for with the general fund — police, fire, parks and recreation, and others. The second part of the plan includes streets, which had been paid for in the past

See BUDGET/8A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hailey Loiland, 11, of Weston models a poncho she made in the junior creativity category at the Stars of Fashion 4-H fashion revue on Tuesday at the Pendleton Convention Center.

## OHA reports widespread sales of tobacco to under-age buyers

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — State public health officials say that the rate of tobacco sales to underage consumers has increased slightly since the state raised the minimum age to buy tobacco from 18 to 21.

The Oregon Legislature passed the new minimum age law, known as Tobacco 21, last year. It went into effect Jan. 1, making Oregon the fifth state in the nation to do so.

The Oregon Health Authority says that in the first six months of 2018, 18 percent of attempts to buy tobacco products by minors — coordinated by the agency as inspections — were successful, according to findings published by OHA on Tuesday.

In Umatilla County the retailer violation rate was 24 percent and in Morrow County it was 50 percent, with the Circle K in Heppner and Ione Market selling cigarettes to a minor during a November 25, 2017 sting.

The Umatilla County stores that sold tobacco to a minor during stings were the 11th Street Market, Chevron Station at 1580 W. Highland and Circle K Store at 1430 N. First St. in Hermiston; the Jalisco Market in Milton-Freewater; and the Southgate Mini Mart and Walmart in Pendleton, which sold an e-cigarette.

The rate of underage sales in Oregon during similar inspections last year was 16 percent, when the mini-

See TOBACCO/8A

