

LINKED: Will continue to stay involved with the freshman, holding monthly events

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ries with her when she’s participating in Link Crew, and this year, she’s been promoted to one of the club’s four directors.

Mazie will spend the year pairing Link Crew members with freshmen and organizing Link Crew events for the first-year students to attend.

Clem said what made the Pendleton Link Crew unique is that it’s a year-round effort rather than an organization that revolves around the first day of school before disbanding.

Link Crew will meet with freshmen again on Wednesday, where they will sit in small groups to gather input on the first few days and share advice.

The club will continue to stay involved with the freshman by holding monthly events where first-year students with perfect attendance, strong grades or some other achievement are recognized

and awarded a prize.

Mazie said the consistent Link Crew provides a presence, allowing her and the rest of the Link Crew members to keep track of the freshmen and finish the school year strong.

Clem said the hope was that the year-round Link Crew contributed toward Pendleton High School’s 94.7 percent graduation rate.

In an effort to maintain strong graduation scores, Link Crew convened the freshmen in the high school gym, where the club lined up the students and had them shake Principal Melissa Sandven’s hand and promise her that they would graduate in 2022.

This was Sandven’s first day with students after she was hired to replace Dan Greenough, who resigned at the end of the last school year.

A former administrator at Rainier Junior/Senior High School with administrative experience in Gresham, Portland, Sandy, and Albuquerque,

New Mexico, Sandven clasped each child’s hand as they moved through the queue, occasionally reminding them of her name and to recite which year they intended to graduate in.

Sandven said she was impressed by the level of organization that went into the freshman orientation and went over some of her own goals for the 2018-2019 school year.

She aims to build trust and unity among staff members, and although she didn’t want to say there was a sense of discord last year, Sandven added that there was a sense that teachers wanted more support this year.

Sandven also wants to revamp Professional Learning Communities, after-school professional development meetings where teachers can meet with each other, so that teachers come away from them with tangible results.

“They’ll see me everyday,” she said. “I’m not in my office all the time.”



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
New English teacher Evan Rummerfield gives directions to freshman Olivia Corbett on Monday during freshman orientation at Pendleton High School.

After meeting Sandven, the students left the gym to either test out their locker or wait for transportation at the front of the building.

Testing out of their lockers, freshmen Jamie Gau and Kenzie Whaley gave the orientation positive reviews, saying they liked the games they

played during the morning.

For the pair and the rest of the freshmen, the fun and games will give way to real school on Tuesday.

COUNCIL: Makad Corp.’s history of development in Eastern Oregon is mixed bag

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percent during the first year to 2 percent starting in 2028.

Makad Corp. also verbally agreed to build a new longterm parking lot to replace the lot it would build on, although it wasn’t included in the lease paperwork that was made publicly available.

At the Tuesday meeting, City Councilor Dale Primmer said he was under the

impression that the gross revenue deal would last through the length of the deal, but the lease states that Makad Corp, through its subsidiary Horse Valley LLC, would only have to use that method through 2046.

Primmer was also concerned about “front-loading” many of the incentives.

Company CEO Elie Makad said the city wouldn’t have to pay “a penny” until Makad Corp. gave them

notice that they had financing in place and were ready to start construction.

Makad also seemed to grow annoyed with the questioning and suggested his company could solely focus on its other Pendleton project, a data center on Airport Road.

“If you don’t want this project, that’s OK,” he said. “It’s not a big deal for us.”

Makad later apologized to the council, saying that

he assumed that they were already fully knowledgeable of the agreement.

Makad Corp. has yet to start construction on an Airport Road data center, which the company originally announced in 2015. Makad Corp. general counsel Allan Fulsher reiterated that the company has spent these past years trying to identify a power source and proper financing.

Makad Corp.’s history of

development in Eastern Oregon is a mixed bag.

Although Makad developed the River Lodge and Grill in Boardman, its plans to build an ethanol plant and a fertilizer plant at the Port of Morrow in the early 2000s never got off the ground. Another port project — a 31-megawatt power plant — operated for a short time before it got wrapped up in a lawsuit with a partnering company. It was eventually

shuttered and sold.

After a lengthy discussion from the council, Mayor Turner postponed a decision on the proposed hotel without a vote.

Due to quirk in the schedule, the city council will meet again next Tuesday for a regular meeting.

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

TAX: Governor Brown has indicated support for changes to property tax system

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real market value. In 1997, voters approved Measure 50, which changed how property taxes are calculated, decoupling assessments from market values and placing a limit on their annual growth.

Supporters say the system’s limits protect taxpayers from sharp annual increases and require local governments to be thrifty.

Detractors, however, say that the system, which among other caps and restrictions typically taxes

owners on the assessed value of a property — rather than its real market value — creates significant disparities in property taxes, even between similar properties in the same area.

State Sent Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, the chair of the Interim Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue, said this week that, while keen to fix inequities in the system, he would prefer to make changes to the property tax system in a “revenue-neutral” way.

He would focus on tweaking Measure 50.

“I’m not looking at revenues as much as I’m looking at reforming the tax code to make it more efficient and less volatile,” Hass said Monday. “So to me, any kind of work like that is preferably revenue neutral.”

At the same event where Kotek spoke, Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, described how K-12 education in Oregon used to get two-thirds of its funding from local property taxes. Instead, now the funding burden lies almost solely on the state’s general

fund, which relies on the highly volatile income tax.

Without Ballot Measures 5 and 50, he said, property taxes would be about \$3.5 billion higher per year, with roughly \$2.1 billion of that allocated to schools.

“That shows you the magnitude of what happened to this state in 1990,” Courtney said. “We have never replaced that source of funding ... that is why we’re struggling so much.”

The prospect of taking up property tax reform next year is somewhat “daunting,” Hass said, for a few

reasons.

Voters would need to approve changes to the state constitution to change the property tax code, which would require educating voters about a complex issue.

Democratic Gov. Kate Brown, who indicated support for changes to the property tax system in May, said at the time that educating voters on the issue would have to come first. Her spokespeople did not return a request for comment Tuesday.

Rep. Knute Buehler,

her Republican challenger, wants to increase education spending by 15 percent. He has suggested funding his plan with cuts in employee benefits packages.

Lawmakers attempted to make changes to the system last year. But even when they floated a homestead exemption, which would exempt part of a home’s value from taxation, the legislation proved to be a “big lift,” Hass said.

“So we’re scratching our heads and trying to figure out what can be done in the next session,” Hass said.

VENDOR: Loosens some restrictions

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were already taken. Spencer said his department had also fielded numerous requests for temporary licenses to sell things such as ice cream, fruit cups or hot dogs in the summer. In an online survey that more than 900 people participated in, 86 percent said they believed the city should add more mobile food vending opportunities.

The new ordinance also loosens up some restrictions, including reducing the number of parking spots required from five to three, allowing push-carts and allowing operation in the C1 and C2 commercial zones, which included downtown. The ordinance does not create a food pod by statute, but the city is looking into creating a gathering space for food trucks in the public parking lot on Orchard Avenue across from the post office.

Shipping containers

On Monday the council also discussed the results of a community survey regarding metal shipping containers used as storage units. The city does not currently regulate them, but the council asked that city staff look into possible regulations as the containers — usually seen on trains or ships — become more popular as an inexpensive storage option.

Spencer said 376 people filled out the optional online survey that was open to anyone. Sixty-nine percent of those respondents said they were opposed to all use of the containers in a residential zone, 51 percent said they were opposed to use in a commercial zone and 35 percent said they were opposed to use in an industrial zone.

Recommendations from the planning commission, however, suggested that the containers be allowed in residential zones under a few circumstances — requiring the containers to be 20 feet long or less, placed behind the front line of the residence, on a concrete slab, screened from view and free of rust or logos. One container per acre would also be allowed in commercial zones and industrial use of the containers would be allowed. Shipping containers would require a license, with 90-day and longterm licenses available. Existing containers would be grandfathered in.

Councilors had mixed reactions — Doug Primmer said it seemed like it would be too much work added on the code enforcement office, while John Kirwan said the city needed to write something it could enforce, just like regular storage sheds are currently subject to some rules. Lori Davis said she was OK with shipping containers in residential zones as long as they followed the rules suggested.

Spencer said he would keep the feedback in mind as he returned to the planning commission to start the process of creating the actual ordinance to bring back before the city council at a later date.

Street projects

On Monday, the council approved a request from city staff to “flip-flop” two items on its streets capital improvement plan.

The plan was for the city to take on no major projects from the plan in fiscal year 2019-20, then complete a realignment of the three-way intersection of Geer, Harper and Umatilla River roads in 2021 and pave the eastern

portion of Theater Lane after.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the city has since changed its philosophy on paying for sidewalks on new projects and decided to only pave travel lanes on Theater Lane and leave addition of sidewalks, curbs and gutters to developers who build out there. That cut down the project’s cost from approximately \$1.3 million to about \$600,000. At the same time, engineers are having a harder time than expected coming up with a re-design for the Geer/Harper intersection, where three roads cross over the railroad tracks west of Home Depot.

“One of the things we have realized when we got into looking at Geer and Harper is that there are no good solutions there,” Morgan said.

Flipping the Theater and Geer/Harper projects would be easier from a cash flow perspective, give engineers more time and have East Theater Lane finished by the end of 2020.

Kirwan said he was opposed to the idea because the portion of Theater Lane that would be paved is beyond where the housing development lies.

“No citizens of the city of Hermiston live past there,” he said.

But councilor Jackie Myers, who lives in the area of the project, said residents still use the road frequently to get to other places. She has asked for years when the city will pave the road. And councilor Doug Smith said his family would use Theater Lane more often if the unpaved portion got paved.

In the end, all councilors but Kirwan voted in favor of the change.

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