

Dr. Kent Walker shuts Pendleton practice without notice

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Osteopathic physician and surgeon Kent Walker shut down his Pendleton practice Monday without notifying patients.

The door is locked and the lights off at the office at 202 S.E. Dorion Ave. Staff taped a message on Walker's letterhead inside the glass front.

"It is with heavy hearts, the staff here at Pendleton Family Practice and Sports Medicine have to inform you of Dr. Walker's decision to close his family practice immediately," the messages states. "It is short notice for all of us, and we all know how slim the provider availability is in Pendleton."

A call to the office received a similar response:

"If you have reached this messages, Dr. Walker has closed his family prac-



Staff photo by Phil Wright

Dr. Kent Walker shut down his Pendleton medical practice Monday with no notice to patients. Staff at Pendleton Family Practice and Sports Medicine posted this message near the front door stating the closure was immediate but did not provide any reason for Walker's decision.

ice immediately. It is short notice for all of us."

Both the phone and the paper notices let patients know how to request their medical records, and both thanked patients for their years of patronage. But no

one is explaining what led to the closure.

Walker in early 2017 faced losing his Oregon medical license in the wake of an Oregon Medical Board review of his practice. According to the board's

order, Walker did not provide patients with risk notifications about medication he prescribed and he prescribed "controlled substances without a legitimate medical purpose or without following accepted procedures for examination of patients or for record keeping."

The order noted Walker's patient charts created the impressions of thorough physical examinations, but in reality the chart notes were "a cut and paste from previous clinical encounters, casting the veracity of the notes into serious doubt." Those charts also did not "adequately describe" Walker's process for treating patients with chronic pain "with a long term regimen of opioid and benzodiazepines [drugs for anxiety and other conditions]." Among the litany of infractions, Walker also did not consistently use urine

tests to verify if patients followed their treatment plan.

The board stopped shy of revoking Walker's license to practice and placed him on probation for five years, which included limits on prescribing opioids and random audits of his practice. He also had to pay a \$5,000 penalty.

Walker also is a defendant in the wrongful death lawsuit from the family of Scott Graber of Pendleton. Graber died July 8, 2015. He was 42. The lawsuit in Umatilla County Circuit Court accuses Walker of knowing Graber had a history of trouble with alcohol and narcotics yet prescribed opioids and muscle relaxants for him anyway.

The lawsuit alleges Graber visited Pendleton Family Practice and Sports Medicine the day before he died and showed up "visibly intoxi-

cated," and Walker gave him a prescription for hydrocodone/acetaminophen. Hours after filling the prescription, Graber consumed alcohol and approximately 45 of the tablets and died from an overdose of both.

The lawsuit seeks about \$1.8 million, including \$1 million in non-economic damages for the loss Graber's mother, Bonnie Rae Graber, has suffered. That case has a status check on Jan. 25.

Walker also practices at Sound Family Medicine clinics in Bonney Lake and Puyallup, Washington. Staff there reported he was seeing patients Friday. He did not return a call seeking comment. Walker is on probation in Washington, according to the Washington Department of Health, because of his discipline in Oregon.

Oregon U.S. attorney's office seeks case delays in shutdown

PORTLAND (AP) — The U.S. Department of Justice has sought to delay some high-profile civil cases in Oregon — including a lawsuit filed by the widow of refuge takeover spokesman Robert "LaVoy" Finicum — as the federal government shutdown continues.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports federal courts in the state remain open and operating, with court funding available through Jan. 11.

After that date, if funding isn't restored,

payments would be in jeopardy for jurors, court reporters, public defenders and probation officers and likely would force changes in court operations.

First Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Asphaug says Oregon's U.S. Attorney's Office has furloughed a little over one-third of its approximately 130-member staff.

Federal prosecutors and support staff who are showing up to work in Oregon aren't getting paid, except for U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams.

Chronic offender Price behind bars in Multnomah County

By JADE MCDOWELL AND PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Jerome Martel Price of Hermiston faces his second criminal case in federal court in four years.

He took a plea deal in 2015 for trespassing on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, according to federal court records. This time, the U.S. District Attorney's Office of Oregon charged Price, 33, with one count of felon in possession of a firearm. The charge stems from Hermiston police arresting Price on Dec. 10, 2018.

Umatilla County District Attorney Dan Primus said his office proceeded to prosecute Price on charges of a felon in possession of a firearm, second-degree criminal trespass and criminal trespass while in possession of a firearm until the federal prosecutors stepped in. But Primus said this is not a case of the feds stepping on local toes.

"They really wanted to reach out and help Umatilla County," he said. "They know Umatilla County is a rural county with a volume of cases they can help with."

Primus said his office has a good relationship with the U.S. Attorney's Office and he sees its assistance as a means to help make rural communities safer. He also said while it is hard as a prosecutor to give up a case, he has full confidence in the capabilities of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Hermiston police officer Riley Studebaker on Dec. 10 arrested Price on charges of second-degree criminal tres-

pass and felon in possession of a firearm. According to the probable cause affidavit, a woman called about 2:40 a.m. to report her husband was holding an intruder at gunpoint in the alley behind their East Gladys Avenue home. Studebaker arrived to find Price and the caller's husband in the alley.

The man told the officer he heard his cellar door rattle and saw a motion-activated light turn on in his backyard. When he grabbed his pistol and went to investigate, he told Studebaker he saw the suspect in the alley near his travel trailer and pointed the gun at him, ordering him to lay down until police arrived.

He also alleged that a gun on the ground at his feet, a loaded Springfield XDM 40 caliber semi-automatic pistol, had been handed to him by Price.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said different states have different laws regarding their rights when someone intrudes on their property and Oregon's is "all based on reasonableness."

"What would a reasonable person think was reasonable force for a citizen to apply or an officer to apply in that case?" he said. "I can't speak for the property owner, but it's dark out, and the property owner doesn't know yet if they're missing anything."

Studebaker wrote in the affidavit that Price claimed the gun on the ground was the homeowner's. Price claimed he had been out for a walk when he knocked on the door of the home because he thought a friend lived there. When no one

answered, he said, he entered the backyard through a gate and knocked on the cellar door before exiting the yard.

The affidavit states security cameras at the home show Price entered the backyard, walked around and then entered the alley to inspect a travel trailer belonging to the homeowners before the confrontation. Studebaker also states in the document the footage showed Price handing a pistol to the homeowner.

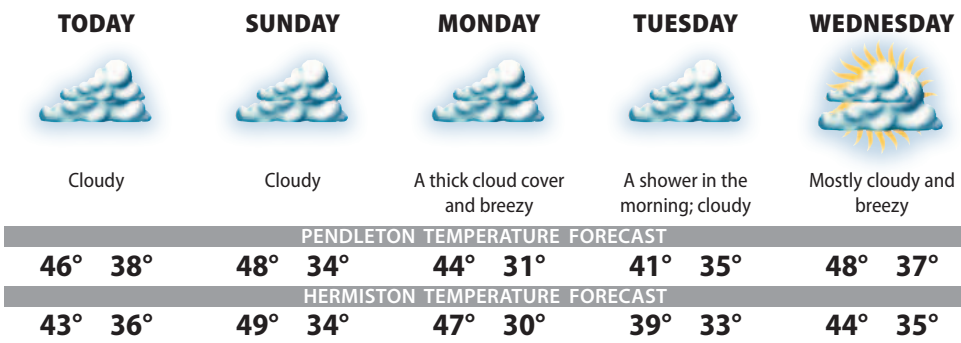
Edmiston said Price is well-known to police in the immediate area, and had 36 arrests and 63 citations by local law enforcement including the Hermiston Police Department and the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office.

He said while it is "frustrating" dealing with the same person over and over again, and citizens ask why a chronic offender hasn't been taken off the streets for longer, Edmiston said real life police work isn't as simple as crime shows on television. Police face everything from uncooperative witnesses to an increasing number of restrictions coming from rulings by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

"This job is getting more and more difficult to present rock-solid cases to the DA," he said.

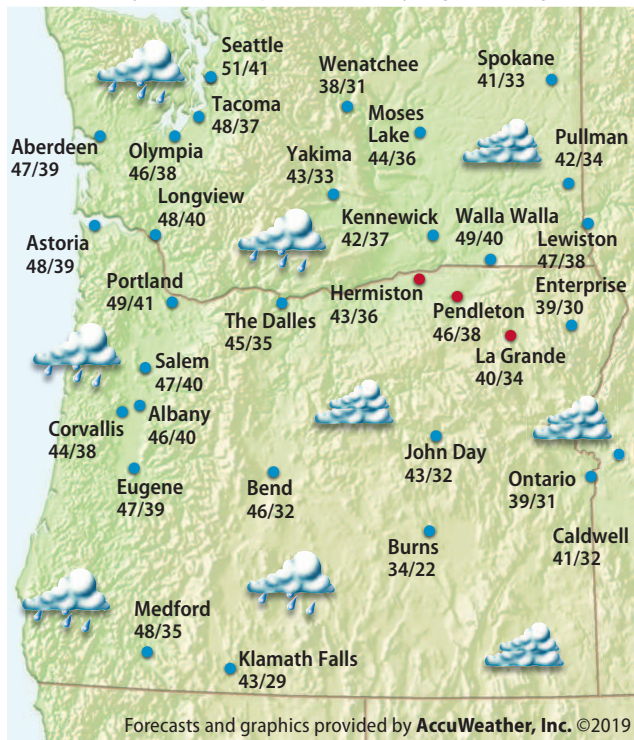
Price on Friday had a detention hearing in federal court in Portland, and Magistrate Judge John V. Acosta ordered Price to remain as an inmate of the Multnomah County Jail, Portland. The court also set a two-day trial for Price starting March 5 in Portland.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



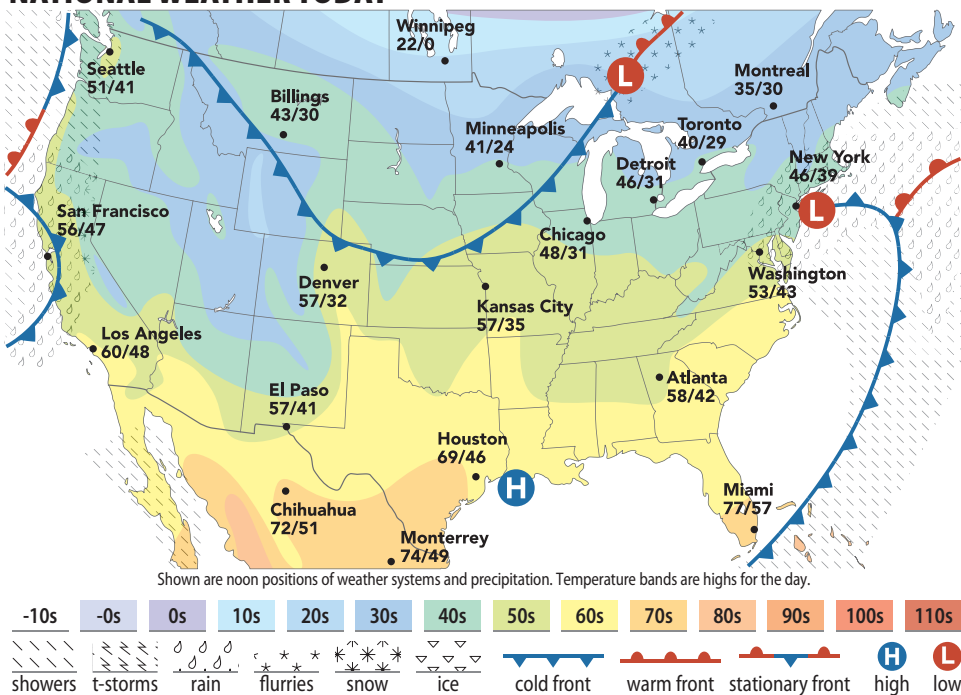
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	53°	40°	
Normals	40°	26°	
Records	69° (2012)	-9° (2004)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.02"		
Normal month to date	0.24"		
Year to date	0.02"		
Last year to date	Trace		
Normal year to date	0.24"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	53°	33°	
Normals	40°	27°	
Records	64° (1989)	-4° (1942)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.01"		
Normal month to date	0.16"		
Year to date	0.01"		
Last year to date	Trace		
Normal year to date	0.16"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	SSE 4-8		
Sun.	SSW 4-8		
Boardman	SE 6-12		
Pendleton	S 7-14		
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	7:36 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	4:25 p.m.		
Moonrise today	7:16 a.m.		
Moonset today	4:22 p.m.		
New First Full Last			
Jan 5	Jan 13	Jan 20	Jan 27

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 87° in Sebring, Fla. Low -29° in Waverly, Colo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Hayes criticized for 'bad faith' in bankruptcy

SALEM (AP) — The Oregon Government Ethics Commission has accused former Oregon First Lady Sylvia Hayes of using her bankruptcy proceeding to drag out a resolution of her ethics case months longer than needed.

The Statesman Journal reports that Carolyn Wade, a senior assistant attorney general representing the commission, made the claim in a Dec. 31 fil-

ing in Hayes' bankruptcy proceeding. Hayes filed for Chapter 13 bankruptcy in July 2018.

In addition to up to \$110,000 in possible civil penalties from 22 ethics violations, Hayes has a more than \$124,000 judgment against her for a public records lawsuit The Oregonian won.

Wade said the bankruptcy proceeding is meritless. The ethics commission

ruled in January 2018 — six months before Hayes filed for bankruptcy — that she violated state ethics laws by using her position for the financial benefit of herself and her business.

Many of the violations centered around Hayes' work on environmental consulting contracts while also involved as an unpaid adviser who did energy policy work in Gov. John Kitzhaber's office.

CORRECTIONS: The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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