

# Airport: Commission will meet again for a special meeting on Feb. 27

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Chrisman said he doesn't want to engage in this conflict, but the FAA doesn't allow the city to rent to tenants in perpetuity without recapturing the value of the land.

If the city doesn't include some sort of reversionary language in its lease contracts, Chrisman said it could put the city at risk of losing its federal airport funding, referencing the \$8 million runway project the FAA is funding this year.

Nelson was apologetic about losing his temper at the commission meeting, but he and many other airport entrepreneurs remain unconvinced about Chrisman's arguments.

Nelson said he built the Pendleton Aircraft Service building in 1975 and leased with the airport for 40 years afterward.

Curtiss Nelson, Harold Nelson's son and a mechanic at Pendleton Aircraft Service, said there's also an emotional appeal to the building, pointing to the handprints the family left before the concrete floor set.

The elder Nelson said he leased the land for \$170 per month before his last lease

expired, and although he's willing to pay more in his next deal, he doesn't like the reversionary options the commission is discussing.

At a meeting Wednesday, the commission hunkered around a conference table to discuss those options.

The latest staff proposal gave renters two options.

The first option was a standard reversionary model: A tenant could rent airport property for a maximum of 50 years. At the end of the lease, the tenant could either pack up their building and leave, allow the city to take the building, or renew the lease and pay the a "reversion deferral fee" that covers the value of the building.

The second option has a tenant paying 1.5 times the standard lease rate for a maximum of 40 years. Once the lease ends, the premium could either be reimbursed if the tenant walks away from the land or applied toward the reversion deferral fee if they choose to renew.

Not every commissioner was enthusiastic about the proposal.

"Having a reversionary situation with any sort of clause is going to be a massive disincentive for folks to



Staff photo by E.J. Harris  
**Curtiss Nelson works on cleaning the tail structure of an Air Tractor while performing the annual inspection for the aircraft Thursday at Pendleton Aircraft Service at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton.**

come here," commissioner Mike Short said.

David Styer, a member of the airport commission and the owner of All Terrain Aircraft, said he did some research and not every federal airport had reversionary clauses in their lease contracts.

Modeled after similar leases at the airport in Medford, Styer suggested including a third option where a tenant could pay twice the market lease rate in exchange for having no reversionary language in the contract.

But after the meeting, many business owners said they didn't like the alternatives.

Owners like Nelson and South County Helicopter owner Cliff Hoeft didn't like the thought of continually paying the value for a building they already paid for.

In the owners' view, taking a straight reversionary clause would devalue their investment because potential buyers wouldn't want to acquire a property that could be taken back by the city and would put a damper

on future growth as well.

"I'm an unhappy camper," Hoeft said.

Ultimately, the commission voted to table the issue so members could take a closer look at Styer's proposal. The commission will meet again for a special meeting on Feb. 27.

After the meeting, Styer said he was encouraged by the commission's receptiveness to his idea, but admitted it could all be undone once the recommendation goes before the city council.

A non-voting member of the airport commission, City Councilor Becky Marks told the commission that it needed to focus on what was best for Pendleton taxpayers.

"This has got to continue, or at least get on the foot, of sustainability," she said. "We're not sustaining this airport with the businesses that we have here now, except for UAS, maybe. So think about that. We're the ones who are having to cover the bill. Whether you fly into here or work into here, you're making money. We have the right to make money too. That's the bottom line."

The airport business owners said they felt

unfairly burdened to financially support the airport and got short shrift compared to the emerging unmanned aerial systems industry.

On Tuesday, the council unanimously approved to take out a \$2.6 million loan to build an 18,000-square-foot hangar on behalf of the drone company PAE ISR.

Wildhorse Helicopter Co. owner Brad Wahl said the city got "tunnel vision" when it came to serving the Pendleton UAS Range.

Wahl said an emerging industry like UAS was volatile and could fluctuate in the future, but general aviation has been a mainstay at the airport even in lean years.

Chrisman said he doesn't want there to be a perception that it's manned flight versus unmanned flight at the airport. He said he sees value in having aircraft service providers at the airport and includes them in marketing pitches.

Chrisman had a simple answer for general aviation business owners who wanted to stay long term while complying with FAA lease rules.

"Stay forever, my friend," he said.

# Jurors: How much weather had anything to do with shortage remains a question

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section of McKinney Avenue in Hermiston as a public road. About 17 minutes past 9, sheriff's Sgt. Dwight Johnson entered the room and asked to interrupt. He is in charge of court security.

"Judge Lieuallen is in a trial," he said, "and he has ordered us to recruit six jurors for that trial because there is a shortage."

The judge thought the trial would last only Wednesday, Johnson said,

and maybe some folks with free time could volunteer. Otherwise security would make the selection. He also told commissioners a random group of citizens would be better suited than a selection of county employees.

"Any volunteers at all?" Johnson asked.

One man raised his hand. The public hearing on the road ended at about 9:35 with the board approving the request.

"McKinney is a public road," Elfering said, which

drew applause from the many there for the hearing.

He also quipped he knew most in attendance would enjoy staying for the rest of the meeting, but they could report to the deputy in the hallway.

Johnson during a phone interview Thursday morning said one more person volunteered and his staff selected the other four. He said he looked around the courthouse first for jurors but did not find anyone. The public meeting, however, had more

than enough. Being a juror may not be a joy, he said, but the service is critical.

Roy Blaine said it was unusual to not have enough people to serve on a jury. Blaine is the trial court administrator for the 6th Judicial District of Umatilla and Morrow counties. Since taking on the position in late 2007, he said he could recall only three or four times the court lacked jurors. When that happens, he said, a judge can ask the sheriff or court administra-

tor to find enough people to create a jury.

How much the weather had anything to do with the juror shortage remains a question. Thick fog and slick conditions shut down Interstate 84 between Pendleton and La Grande, but most roads in Umatilla and Morrow counties were OK to drive. The National Weather Service initially had a winter storm warning for Tuesday but dropped that to an advisory through Wednesday afternoon.

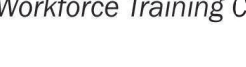
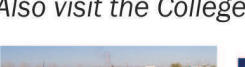
The trial was for Shawn Dion Simpson, 60, of Pendleton, who faced charges of misdemeanor driving under the influence of intoxicants and felony aggravated harassment for spitting on a Pendleton police officer in August 2018. Court records show the trial lasted until Wednesday afternoon. The jury voted 10-2 to find Simpson guilty of the harassment and 12-0 to find him guilty of driving under the influence. His sentencing is March 4.

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