

Pendleton slated to raise city fees

By EAST OREGONIAN

Pending city council approval, the city of Pendleton will raise fees for many of its services.

While fees on ambulance, utilities and other services automatically rise with the consumer price index each year, the city hasn't touched others for years, City Manager Robb Corbett wrote in a report to the council.

Corbett wrote one of the fees hasn't been adjusted since 1966.

For most of the fees that hadn't been adjusted for five years or more, their amount was raised by 15 percent. Those adjusted more recently were raised 3 percent.

While the city doesn't want to raise every fee, the increases cover everything from planning fees to parking tickets to park shelter rentals.

Although many of the fee increases were small, Corbett wrote that it served an important purpose.

"Fees that properly reflect the cost of providing services transfers the burden to the individual with the benefit, thereby decreasing the burden on the general taxpayer," he wrote. "This frees up resources to be used for services of a more general benefit to the pub-

lic and expected by our citizens such as police protection, library, and parks."

The council is also set to consider a new airport lease with a significant incentives package.

QL Investments LLC wants to build a 30,800-square-foot row of box hangars at the Pendleton airport. As a part of the lease agreement, the city will provide QL Investments with a year of free rent, a rent discount to offset the value of the developer building a taxiway to the hangar, and free water and sewer to a public bathroom at the facility.

With the taxiway discount valued at \$60,000, Airport Manager Steve Chrisman estimates it would take four to six years for QL Investments to begin paying its \$10,350 annual rent.

"This project should help alleviate much of the built-up demand for hangar space on the airfield, especially amongst the manned pilots," Chrisman wrote in a report to the city council.

The lease proposal is for 30 years, with two 10-year renewal options.

The council will meet at 7 p.m. at the council chambers in city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave.

La Grande Observer owner looks to sell during bankruptcy

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

The parent company of the *La Grande Observer* and *Baker City Herald* is selling property and buildings during bankruptcy proceedings.

Western Communications Inc. filed in January for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. The company publishes the two Eastern Oregon newspapers, along with the *Bend Bulletin*, the *Redmond Spokesman* and the *Brookings Curry Coastal Pilot* in Oregon, and the *Crescent City Daily Triplet* and the *Sonora Union Democrat* in California. Western Communications came out of bankruptcy in 2012, according to court records, and now owes more than \$7 million.

Representatives for Western Communications were in bankruptcy court Tuesday in Portland for a case management conference, according to court documents and recordings. Albert Kennedy of Portland, lead attorney for Western Communications, told the court the sale of the company's building in Sonora could close next week for about \$1 million, which will go to Sandton Credit Solutions, a major creditor. Sale of the Redmond property is pending, he continued, and should bring in a little more than \$300,000 and go to the almost \$1 million Western Communications owes in property taxes to Deschutes County. The company also is working with a broker to sell its property in La Grande.

Kennedy also said the company needs more time to sell its flagship building in Bend, which it values at \$20 million.

U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Trish Brown oversaw the proceeding and approved the company's request to use Dirks, Van Essen, Murray & April as its sales agent. The New Mexico firm specializes in selling off media companies. But Brown was

not willing to allow Western Communications to hire a company for financial advice through the bankruptcy.

Western Communications filed a court request to employ The Mountain Group as financial consultants. Brown told Kennedy some of the language in the contract for The Mountain Group gave her some heartburn.

Reading from the document, the judge said the agreement states The Mountain Group would not be liable except for bad faith, willful misconduct or gross negligence.

"Gotta take out the word 'gross,'" Brown said. "If they're negligent, they're responsible."

The agreement also would prohibit Western Communications from suing anyone working for The Mountain Group.

"So here's my concern," Brown explained, "What if somebody from The Mountain Group embezzles money from the debtor? And you have just said we're not going to sue any individual person. And they're not going to be liable."

That kind of deal, she said, "just opens the door to some individual to do some bad act."

Brown also did not approve of the agreement limiting liability to the amount equal to what The Mountain Group paid employees. If someone making \$300,000 stole \$1 million, she said, the deal would mean the victim could only sue for \$300,000.

"Ummm, I don't think so," she said. "So I'm not willing to limit the liability to the compensation paid."

Bankruptcy trustee Sarah Flynn said she also had those concerns. Brown told Kennedy it was up to The Mountain Group to decide if it could live with her changes and she did not expect an answer right away.

The court will revisit Western Communications' financial plans May 29.

The Alebrije brings tamales and more to Hermiston



ABOVE: Alebrijes sit on display at The Alebrije, a new restaurant in Hermiston.

LEFT: The Alebrije, a new restaurant, has opened on Southwest 11th Street.



Staff photos by Jade McDowell

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The owners of Tacos Xavi have branched out.

Gabriela Rodriguez said the taco truck business will continue, but this week they also opened a brick-and-mortar restaurant known as The Alebrije. It is located at 230 S.W. 11th St. in Hermiston, next to the Last Chance Tavern.

"The opportunity came because we saw this was for renting, and my husband and I were thinking to do something different," Rodriguez said.

The large menu includes varieties of tamales, alambres, mariscos, chilaquiles, sopas, tacos and other home-style Mexican food. The owners are also applying for a liquor license.

For now The Alebrije is open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week with the exception of Sundays, when the restaurant closes at 7 p.m. Rodriguez said they serve breakfast burritos in the mornings and hope to eventually start opening up earlier in the day.

The business is named after alebrijes, which are colorful creatures in Mexican folklore made up of elements from several animals. Alebrijes are featured in the popular children's movie "Coco." The Hermiston restaurant has several hand-carved wooden alebrije sculptures from Oaxaca and Rodriguez said one day they may start importing alebrijes to sell in the store.

The Alebrije opened this week in the newly remodeled and repainted building that until recently housed Tacos San Pedro. Rodriguez said the sit-down restaurant has had a good response so far from word of mouth and they hope word continues to spread.

"Come and see and try what we have," she said.

Bonneville Power Administration asks consumers to conserve ‘tight’ energy supply

East Oregonian

Pacific Northwest residents are being asked to conserve energy as the Bonneville Power Administration reports cold weather and other factors are putting pressure on the electrical system.

A news release by BPA blames "unseasonably cold temperatures, low stream flows for hydropower production, transmission

import constraints and high natural gas constraints" for putting stress on the energy supply and asks people to lower their energy usage where possible to "keep the federal power system operating smoothly and support regional reliability."

"It's always a good idea to use electricity wisely, and it's even more important when supplies are tight," Elliot Mainzer, BPA administrator, said

in a statement.

Temperatures in Umatilla County are expected to dip into the teens throughout the weekend. BPA asks that customers open their blinds to take advantage of the warming powers of natural light, lower their thermostat and take other energy-saving measures.

BPA provides wholesale power to Hermiston Energy Services, Umatilla Electric Company, Pacific

Power and other area utilities.

Heppner chamber provides overview

HEPPNER — The upcoming Heppner Chamber of Commerce meeting will feature an all-entites report.

People will receive a variety of updates from those who present information. The meeting is Thursday, March 7 at noon in the Heppner City Hall Conference Room. The no-host lunch, which is catered by Breaking Grounds, costs \$10. The menu includes a taco salad and cookie.

Those planning to attend need to RSVP by Tuesday, March 5, to ensure there's adequate seating and enough food. For more information or to reserve a meal, contact 541-676-5536 or heppnerchamber@centurytel.net.

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12:00* 2:20* 4:40 7:00 9:20
HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON: THE HIDDEN WORLD (PG)
12:10* 2:30* 7:20 ED 4:50 9:50
ALITA: BATTLE ANGEL (PG13)
1:20* 4:00 6:40 9:30
ISN'T IT ROMANTIC (PG13)
4:20 9:40
GREEN BOOK (PG13)
6:50
SPIDER MAN: INTO THE SPIDER VERSE (PG)
1:30*
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