

Cities encourage residents to participate in 2020 census

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

The 2020 U.S. Census is still a year away, but cities and states are getting an early start on encouraging residents to participate.

This week the city of Hermiston issued a proclamation that it is “committed to partnering with the US Census Bureau and the Umatilla County Complete Count Committee to promote participation” in the U.S. Census.

“We need to make sure the community is aware this is coming and how important it is to get an accurate count,” Mayor David Drotzmann said.

He said he hoped that residents would realize the census was not about finding specific people, such as

undocumented immigrants, but was instead about “pure numbers.”

The proclamation published Monday noted that census numbers assist in planning for schools, hospitals, roads, utilities and other community assets. About \$675 billion in state and federal funds are issued every year based on the U.S. Census.

Umatilla city manager David Stockdale said he would encourage Umatilla residents to participate in the comprehensive count of every man, woman and child in the United States so that Umatilla can get the full state and federal funding it is entitled to. Census counts also determine cities’ eligibility for grants for major projects.

“I want to make sure peo-

ple clearly understand those numbers have a significant and major impact on our city,” he said.

He pointed out that the census is mandated by the U.S. Constitution and that it has taken place every 10 years for the entire history of the United States.

He said Umatilla’s population includes Two Rivers Correctional Institution and inmates there will be included in the census.

Milton-Freewater city manager Linda Hall said the census is a “very important time for municipalities.”

It is not only important for people to participate in the count, she said, but also to report other information such as age and income level accurately.

She said grants for community projects often take

demographics into consideration, and cities and schools also use demographic information for planning purposes.

“You can get a feel for, do you need to start gearing up to more services that would serve a certain age group, such as senior citizens or young families,” she said.

Gov. Kate Brown declared April 1 “Census Day” for the entire state of Oregon to bring awareness to the issue.

“From more federal dollars for our schools and hospitals, to ensuring our roads are safe and well-kept, the census has a profound and significant effect in the lives of all Oregonians,” she said in a statement.

“An accurate census not only allows us to have better representation in Congress,

but it also tells the story of Oregon — who we are, and where we are going.”

By April 1, 2020, all households will have received an invitation to participate in the census via mail, phone or — for the first time in this country’s history — online. The census will record where each person was living on April 1, 2020.

Census takers will begin following up in May 2020 with households that have not responded, and by December 2020 the bureau will deliver counts to the president that will be used, among other things, to apportion representation in the House of Representatives and a state’s Electoral College votes.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau website,

U.S. residents may see census employees in their neighborhoods throughout this year, as they verify addresses or drop off census materials.

Legitimate census takers will present an ID badge with a Department of Commerce watermark and their photo. Questions about whether a person is a real census taker can be directed to 855-562-2020 (press 3 to speak to a local representative).

A census taker will never ask questions about a person’s Social Security number or credit card information, or ask for money.

The U.S. Census Bureau is currently recruiting thousands of temporary jobs related to the census. To apply, visit <https://2020census.gov/en/jobs.html>.

UCSO arrests four in stolen vehicle case

The Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office, along with the help of Community Corrections, arrested four people in Hermiston on Tuesday, on several felony warrants and for stolen vehicle charges.

Frank Jessie Walker, 39, was arrested on a felony warrant. Alexis Jose Ramos, 27, Codey Allen Sanders, 24, and Olivia Michelle Huxoll, 28, were all arrested shortly after on felony warrants or for parole or probation violations. All four were taken to the Umatilla County Jail.

On Tuesday, UCSO Detective Loren Westmoreland was patrolling the area near East Punkin Center road and North Ott Road, when he noticed an unoccupied red Honda Civic parked on the road. He checked the license plates, which were registered to a Mercedes, noted that the front and rear license plates were different, and the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) had been removed. He

could also smell fresh paint on the car.

Upon checking law enforcement databases, he confirmed the vehicle was stolen, and was supposed to be a white car, not red. As Westmoreland was waiting for another deputy to show up, Walker started coming toward the car. Westmoreland is familiar with Walker, and knew he had an outstanding felony warrant for his arrest. He told Walker to stop and placed him under arrest. The deputies found that Walker had red paint on his clothing and a key that started the stolen car.

Several parole and probation officers arrived at the scene, as well as an Oregon State Police officer and a Hermiston Police officer. Within a few minutes, Ramos arrived at the scene. Officers recognized him as having a warrant, and arrested him. They also found and arrested Sanders and Huxoll, who were in the area.

La Grande man pleads guilty to invading women’s privacy

PENDLETON — Jared Demarr Hansen of La Grande pleaded guilty to invading the privacy of two women when he videoed them using a restroom in February in Stanfield.

Hansen also dropped his request for a new attorney.

Hansen, 34, appeared Wednesday in the Pendleton courtroom of Circuit Judge Christopher Brauer via video from the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton. He pleaded guilty to first-degree invasion of privacy in two cases. The Umatilla County District Attorney’s Office filed the second case that morning stemming from Hansen’s arrest on Feb. 17 at the Pilot Travel Center, Stanfield.

Hansen last week wrote a letter to the court requesting a new attorney, claiming Herman Bylenga, his court-appointed attorney, had not consulted with him. Brauer asked Bylenga and Hansen to address that matter first.

Bylenga said he apologized to Hansen on the record at a previous hearing. He explained he had not talked to his client because he believed Hansen was out of jail. Hansen confirmed he now was satisfied with Bylenga’s representation and wanted to drop his motion.

Brauer dismissed the request and accepted Hansen’s pleas to the class C felonies. Bylenga said Hansen faced probation for the crimes.

The court set Hansen’s sentencing for Monday to allow at least one victim to give a statement.

Council wants your opinion on street revenue ideas

East Oregonian

The Pendleton City Council is taking its options for raising more revenue for street maintenance on the road.

Council members gathered Tuesday for a workshop, where Mayor John Turner distributed a sheet of revenue ideas to each councilor.

Turner emphasized that these were not ironclad proposals, but ideas meant to spur public discussion as council members present them to community groups.

Turner said the city had about \$1.2 million in the upcoming fiscal year for street maintenance funding, but needed another million dollars to start fixing a deteriorating street system.

“The message we’re going to take out to the public is, ‘OK, you told us that infrastructure, maintenance, and repair is your No. 1 issue, you our citizens. You told us to fix it. We’re going to fix it but it isn’t going to be free and it’s not going to be cheap,’” he said.

The list of ideas includes the one unveiled in March: a 6-cent gas tax proposal followed by a successive 7-cent proposal. If both pass, the city would be able to repeal the \$5.21 street utility fee.

They could also go the other direction and rely increasingly on the street utility fee, which does not require a ballot measure to pass. The fee, which is assessed to customers’ utility bills, could be nearly doubled or tripled and garner the city another \$450,000 to \$900,000 for street repairs.

Although the concepts didn’t have numbers figures attached, the sheet also included other ideas that were a little less conventional:

- An “entertainment fee” that’s charged to hotel rooms, recreational vehicle spots, and bed-and-breakfast rooms
- A ticket fee for events of 500 people or more
- A street light fee
- A beverage fee

At the workshop, some councilors suggested ideas not on the list, like a payroll or income tax or a restaurant tax.

The council is looking for better results than their last appeal to the public in 2015, when a 5-cent gas tax proposal was voted down by nearly a 2 to 1 margin.

Cities worry about bill’s impact on development

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

A bill aimed at regulating construction wages has cities worried major developers will look elsewhere.

House Bill 2406, passed out of committee last week, would require private companies to pay prevailing wages on construction projects in Oregon covered by enterprise zone tax incentives.

Projects under \$20 million would be exempted, according to the bill’s current language.

David Stockdale, Umatilla’s city manager, said the enterprise zone is a “significant” incentive that has helped bring in data centers and other economic development to Umatilla. He said it seemed counterintuitive to counteract the tax break with higher construction costs.

“Enterprise zones have been highly effective,” he said. “They have had such a high success rate, it’s troubling to see (the legislature) try to fix something that’s definitely not broken.”

Oregon’s current prevailing wage law requires contractors on government-funded projects to pay wages above a certain rate set by the Bureau of Labor and Industry.

Proponents say it prevents contractors from depressing wages in order to be the low

bidder on projects, encourages high-quality work and benefits workers who take home more pay. They want to see those benefits added to private projects that are reaping the benefits of temporary tax breaks through an enterprise zone.

The League of Oregon Cities has pushed back, asking its member cities to submit testimony opposing the bill. Stockdale said he agrees with the League of Oregon Cities that the prevailing wage requirements in the bill might stifle economic development.

“Especially for projects right at that \$20 million threshold, it might not pencil out anymore,” he said.

Hermiston mayor David Drotzmann has expressed his opposition to the bill as well. He tweeted that it would “crush” one of the only economic development tools cities have left in Eastern Oregon. During a city council meeting on Monday he said that companies

looking to locate or expand in the Hermiston area have not-so-subtly threatened to take their business across the river to Washington if Hermiston is not able to provide the right incentives.

He said if paying prevailing wage had added just 10% to Lamb Weston’s \$250 million expansion in Hermiston, that would represent an extra \$25 million expense for the company, wiping out most of the money the company is saving through the enterprise zone tax break.

“That can sometimes be the pendulum swing that takes (projects) up to Washington or over to Idaho,” he said.

Hermiston city councilor Jackie Myers said in addition to increasing labor costs on the construction side, in her professional life she has performed the accounting for projects involving prevailing wage, and “you need a full-time accountant to keep track of that.”

Drotzmann said when Knerr Construction of Hermiston worked on the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center they had to pay a separate consultant to handle the large amounts of paperwork and accounting involved in complying with prevailing wage requirements.

“This is potentially a killer to economic development,” he said.

The bill passed out of the House Committee of Business and Labor on Monday on a 6-5 vote, with Rep. Barreto (R-Cove) casting one of the votes against.

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