

Fire burns playground at Hermiston’s Funland Park

Structure considered a complete loss after early-morning blaze

East Oregonian

Fire early Friday burned through the children’s play area at Hermiston’s Funland Park.

Hermiston police Chief Jason Edmiston reported city police and firefighters from Umatilla County Fire District 1 at 2:43 a.m. responded to a report of a fire at the park, 1245 N.W. Seventh St., Hermiston.

“Law enforcement arrived shortly before fire and reported the majority of the structure appeared to be fully engulfed,” according to the chief.

Firefighters arrived and extinguished the blaze. Personnel remained on scene until daybreak when investigators began looking for the cause of the fire, and as of 9:30 a.m. continued to investigate and to block the parking lot and play structure from public access. Fire marshal Scott Goff and police Lt. Randy Studebaker were on scene.

“Until information is discovered to tell us otherwise, we are treating this as a criminal investigation,” Edmiston stated, “meaning any/all evidence known to us will be collected to assist.” And when more information becomes available, he continued, “it will be disseminated.”

The large wooden play structure was originally built in 1996, but was rebuilt after a fire that took place July 28, 2001, at 2:45 a.m. There were no arrests in that case. The city’s insurance company ended up paying out \$345,000 in that case, and the city and community members added to that amount before hundreds of volunteers rebuilt a larger version of the playground over six days in March 2002.

Larry Fetter, parks and recreation director, said more than half of the structure is a complete loss. He said the parks department is consulting with their insurance provider and putting together a plan. In the short term they are placing a construction fence around the structure to preserve evi-



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

More than half of the Funland play structure at Butte Park was damaged in a fire early Friday morning.



Fire destroyed a play structure and melted a slide early Friday morning at Hermiston’s Funland Park.



Staff photos by Kathy Aney

dence and public safety.

He said the structure will likely be off-limits all summer as the parks and recreation committee designs a new park and figures out how to pay for it.

“I’m very interested in replacing it with materials that are non-combustible,” he said. “It’s just too heart-breaking to go through it again.”

He said the new playground will also be designed with fewer places for people

to hide and with a better surveillance camera system.

The spray park part of Butte Park will open soon, he said, and the parking lot will be available after the construction fence is placed. Fetter said the Tiki Hut was not damaged and is already open for business, and the Butte Challenge will go on as planned this weekend.

Hermiston mayor David Drotzmann tweeted a video from the scene of the fire, calling it one of his saddest

days as mayor.

“One thing’s for sure,” he said. “Hermiston’s a great community. We’ve rebuilt this before. We will rebuild it again. You can’t slow down our spirit. You can’t squelch our pride. We’re a great community, we care about our kids. This park is important to us and we will once again rebuild it from the ashes.”

Donations toward rebuilding the park are being accepted at city hall.

City council to discuss EOTEC Monday

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The Hermiston City Council will continue their discussion about the future of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center on Monday.

The council’s regular meeting starts at 7 p.m. at city hall, 180 N.E. Second St. Preceding that meeting will be a 6 p.m. work session to discuss what the city’s top priorities should be concerning EOTEC. Options for improvements to the site include landscaping, irrigation, an RV park, and adding office and storage space for the Umatilla County Fair staff.

On the agenda for Monday’s regular meeting is an update to the city’s local improvement district ordinance, which allows costs for public infrastructure improvements such as paving a road to be divided among neighbors. The

ordinance has not been updated since 1961 and some sections are out of compliance with state law.

The council will also consider an order giving permission for East McKinney Road to become a county road, to be maintained by Umatilla County. The road, which connects Southeast Fourth Street to South First Street behind Safeway, has formerly been considered a public road but was not a city or county road.

Also on the agenda is approval of a contract with Pioneer Construction to complete an overlay of Hermiston Avenue this summer. Pioneer was the low bidder at \$442,036 for a basic resurfacing or \$579,787 if the council chooses to include a rebuild of sidewalks and storm drains.

The full agenda packet can be found online at hermiston.or.us/meetings.

Forecast: Water supplies across Oregon mixed

Stream flows outlook in Eastern Oregon shows promise

By GEORGE PLAVER
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Oregon farmers and ranchers can expect mixed irrigation supplies heading into summer after months of fast-changing weather.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service released its statewide water outlook report for May, predicting near- to above-average stream flows in eastern and southern Oregon, and near- to below-average stream flows in central and western Oregon.

Scott Oviatt, snow survey supervisor for the NRCS in Portland, said reservoir levels are faring well across the state, averaging from 93% to 140% of normal storage.

“Water users that have access to reservoir storage will likely have adequate water supplies this summer, while those dependent upon in-stream flows will need to continually monitor conditions due to rapidly changing weather patterns,” Oviatt said.

Conditions have been feast or famine through most

of the water year dating back to October, Oviatt said. The year got off to a slow start until record-breaking snowfall in February, which dramatically changed the agency’s forecast.

Then came early April, bringing heavy rains that mixed with rapid snowmelt to cause widespread flooding and record-high stream flows. More than half of river gauging stations around the state measured record-high stream flows, including 300% to 500% of normal in the Umatilla, Walla Walla and Willow Creek basins of northeast Oregon.

Flooding also occurred in the Willamette Basin, which received 186% of its normal April precipitation. Now, as temperatures rise into the upper 80s and much of the in-stream flow has already passed, Oviatt said the concern will begin shifting toward parched rangeland and the possibility of wildfires.

Overall, basins in eastern and southern Oregon have received 100% to 120% of normal precipitation dating back to October, while those in western and central Oregon have received 85% to 100%.

Stanfield city manager leaving for new city

Council to hold special meeting Tuesday to discuss recruitment

East Oregonian

The Stanfield City Council is holding a special meeting Tuesday after city manager Blair Larsen announced he is leaving for a position in another city.

The meeting will take place at 6 p.m. at city hall chambers, 150 W. Coe Ave. The council plans to discuss recruitment of a new administrator and approve an advertisement for the position. The proposed schedule they will consider would see finalists interviewed on July 19.

A draft advertisement for



Blair Larsen

the position included in the agenda packet lists the salary at \$65,000 to \$80,000 plus benefits to manage a staff of 21 employees and an annual budget of about \$3.7 million. Stanfield has a population of 2,185.

Larsen has served as Stanfield’s city manager since May 2013. He has overseen growth in housing and new business, but also controversy over alleged misconduct in the police department and the odor coming from the 3D IdaPro dehydration plant.

He said Friday that he should be able to announce early next week where he is moving.

Young athletes invited to All Comers Youth Track Meet

PENDLETON — Youth ages 18 months to 12 years are encouraged to attend the All Comers Youth Track Meet Saturday, beginning at 9 a.m. at the Pendleton High School track and field facility, 1800 N.W. Carden Ave.

No registration is necessary, and track and field events for several age groups will run concurrently throughout the day. The event is free.

For more information, call Pendleton Parks and Recreation at 541-276-8100.

Thank you to the following businesses for supporting
Newspapers in Education

Their generous support of the East Oregonian NIE program helps provide copies of the newspaper and unlimited access to EastOregonian.com and the e-Edition to schools throughout Umatilla, Morrow and Gilliam counties.



CHI St. Anthony Hospital

541-276-5121
SAHPendleton.org
2081 St. Anthony Way
Pendleton, OR 97801



1415 Southgate
Pendleton, OR
541-276-0880 | RAClub.us



301 S. Main St., Pendleton, OR
541-278-6800 • OldWestFCU.org



541-276-1260
BLUECC.EDU
2411 NW Carden Ave.
Pendleton, OR 97801



249 S. Main St.
Pendleton, OR 97801
541-276-6988
Facebook.com/
DeansPendletonAthletic



Robert Alan
Property Management

541-240-9161
robertalanpm.com

127 SW Emigrant Ave. #1
Pendleton, OR 97801



Blue Mountain Village
Apartments

2700 SW Goodwin Ave.
Pendleton, OR 97801
541-429-4310

For more information on the NIE Program, visit EastOregonian.com/eo/nie.
To make a donation, call 800-522-0255.

EAST OREGONIAN



WILDHORSE
RESORT & CASINO

5/10 - 12

Cineplex Show Times

\$5 Classic Movie
Showing Wednesday at 12PM
JOHNNY GUITAR

Pokemon Detective Pikachu (PG)
2:10p* 4:40p 7:10p
9:40p 11:50a* 9:40p

The Hustle (PG13)
11:40a* 2:00p*
4:20p 7:40p 9:50p

Avengers: Endgame (PG13)
12:00p* 3:50p* 6:30p 8:00p

Long Shot (R)
1:30p* 4:10p 6:50p 9:30p

Ugly Dolls (PG)
11:30a* 1:40p* 3:40p* 5:50p

Breakthrough (PG)
10:10p

John Wick: Chapter 3 Parabellum (R)
Thursday, May 16th • 7:00p, 9:50p

* Matinee Pricing
wildhorseresort.com • 541-966-1850
Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216



WILDHORSE
RESORT & CASINO

5/13

Cineplex Show Times

\$5 Classic Movie
Showing Wednesday at 12PM
JOHNNY GUITAR

Pokemon Detective Pikachu (PG)
4:40p 7:10p
9:40p 9:40p

The Hustle (PG13)
4:20p 7:40p 9:50p

Avengers: Endgame (PG13)
3:50p* 6:30p 8:00p

Long Shot (R)
4:10p 6:50p 9:30p

Ugly Dolls (PG)
3:40p* 5:50p

Breakthrough (PG)
10:10p

John Wick: Chapter 3 Parabellum (R)
Thursday, May 16th • 7:00p, 9:50p

* Matinee Pricing
wildhorseresort.com • 541-966-1850
Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216