

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

# Tip of the Hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the various agencies and businesses in Umatilla County working to lessen the impacts of layoffs and business closures in the area.

In response to the Union Pacific Railroad furlough, the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce, city of Hermiston, the Community Action Program of East Central Oregon and the Oregon Employment Department are joining forces to host a job fair at the Hermiston Community Center on June 10.

In addition, Portland General Electric is working to lessen the impact of upcoming mass layoffs at the Boardman Coal Plant by offering employees free classes at Blue Mountain Community College.

PGE spokesman Steven Corson said the company's \$30,000 donation to BMCC to establish the program was one of the ways PGE was avoiding leaving its employees high and dry.

"We don't want to be that company," he said.

PGE announced its intention to cease coal-based energy production at the plant back in 2010, but they recently started talking with the more than 70 employees who work in Boardman about their post-coal plant options as the deadline loomed.

Casey White-Zollman, BMCC's vice president of public relations, said she and BMCC Foundation Executive Director Margaret Gianotti visited the Boardman facility a few months ago and were impressed by PGE's plan.

"This is a pretty amazing thing they're doing," she said.

There are plenty of jobs to be found in the Hermiston area — the Department of Corrections is desperate to fill jobs at Two Rivers Correctional Institution, and Lamb Weston is in the process of adding 150 new jobs to its \$250 million expansion of its Hermiston processing plant.

Not all jobs are created equal, however. Some of the open jobs in the area fall far below the level of income and benefits that railroad workers were accustomed to. Others require a specialized set of skills that not just anyone can fill.

The community's goal should be to help those without a job find something that is a good fit for them, beyond merely checking the "employed" box. A job fair is a good start. We hope the final product not only includes information about immediate job openings, but also guidance on joining industries from plumbing to real estate.

And we wish all of the area's job seekers a sincere "good luck."



EO file photo

The Portland General Electric coal-fired plant in Boardman is slated for closure in 2020. PGE is working the lessen the impact of upcoming mass layoffs at the plant by offering employees free classes at Blue Mountain Community College.

**A kick in the pants to the patient** who made a "verbal bomb threat" to an employee of the Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center on May 21.

Staff reported the patient to the Umatilla Tribal Police Department, which later arrested the person off-site. Yellowhawk reported no damage or injuries from the threat.

**A tip of the hat to the congregation of Pendleton's First United Methodist Church** who are in the process of selling their 113-year-old stone church on Southeast Second Street but are handling the difficult process with grace.

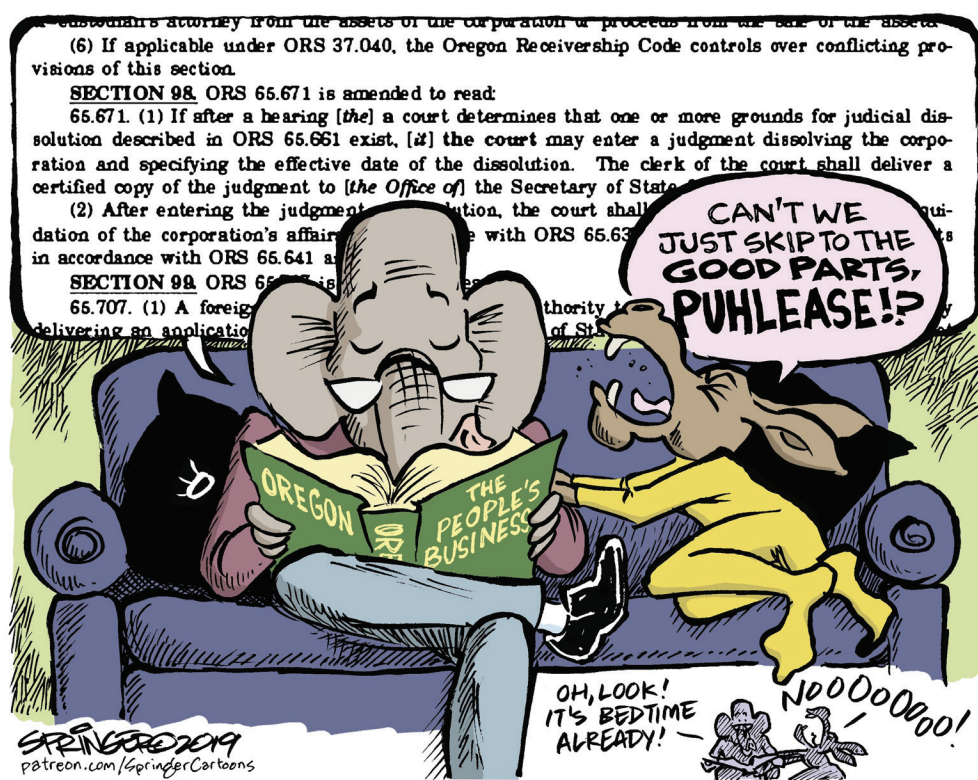
A couple of years ago, the church went on the market for \$410,000. A buyer is in the process of finalizing the sale, so the band of believers is looking for a new home.

The stately house of worship has become a money pit that members just can't afford any longer. Inside the

sanctuary's south wall lurks extensive water damage that requires something in the neighborhood of \$100,000 to repair. Other challenges include asbestos, cracking and peeling, crumbling mortar and deferred maintenance throughout the building.

A Portland real estate investment company named Calibrated Valuation LLC has put down escrow money, said head trustee John Taylor. He expects the sale to close in the next week. Time will tell whether the church will be renovated or razed.

We hope the congregation finds a new home soon. While the new building won't have the same history as the current building, as the church's pastor, Jim Pierce, said during the final service in the old building, "the church" isn't defined by the building, but the believers who gather there.



## YOUR VIEWS

### Homeowners have no recourse against thefts by homeless

If one lives by Stillman Park you can rest assured if you leave anything out the street people will take it. Not all of them are thieves. Some of my wife's cans and bottles for the Pendleton High Dance Team fundraiser were pilfered along with dog food. My neighbors' bottles on her porch were taken. Some packages have been thieved along with a 6-inch electric saw.

The police do an admirable job of touring the park, however, it must take away from doing other police work. Even if they are caught, we now have

catch and release because Oregon says that if one cannot pay or afford bail they are let go. I now must buy two more security cameras. Even showing them on camera will have no effect. They literally have a license to steal.

Roesch Kishpaugh  
Pendleton

### It is not just the streets

Imagine a mother carrying a child, walking on Court Street. She trips and falls, injuring herself and the child. The sidewalk is in an obvious state of disrepair, with huge cracks and crumbling cement (you don't have to walk far to observe this condition). The property

owner has failed to address the hazardous condition in front of his establishment and the city has failed in its duties of oversight. A jury, viewing the obvious dereliction by both the property owner and the city, awards a penalty of six or seven figures to the plaintiff.

Who pays? The city has insurance, as does the property owner. But rates will be raised and possibly the city becomes harder to insure. Ultimately, the taxpayer is always the loser. Our local government has let us down — not just currently, but for a long time. What has happened to our infrastructure is a disgrace that reflects on all of us. Our disgrace is in plain sight to every visitor to our town.

How to address the problem? The city

needs to immediately have city crews do a survey of all business district sidewalks. Property owners need to be notified of sidewalks that do not meet safety codes and standards. Property owners should be given a timed option to pay a private contractor to replace/repair the deficient sidewalk sections or have a city crew make the necessary repairs and then bill the property owner at a set rate.

The city has the codes and requirements as well as the power to enforce them. They need to do their jobs. Our city has become a bad example of municipal neglect. Further disregard can only lead to an even more draconian expense in the future.

Terry Anderson  
Pendleton

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