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EO SPOTLIGHT

PAPER or PLASTIC?



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A single-use plastic bag sits tangled in a shrub along the side of North First Place on Thursday in Hermiston.

Local stores contemplating how to adapt to ban on single-use plastic grocery bags

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Those hundreds of plastic grocery bags stuffed under your kitchen sink are about to become a rare commodity in Oregon.

Gov. Kate Brown signed House Bill 2905 on Thursday, banning single-use plastic grocery bags from stores and restaurants starting in 2020. The bill also requires stores to charge at least 5 cents per bag for alternatives, such as paper and reusable bags.

Area stores are still considering how they will adapt.

Dave Mead, manager of Harvest Foods in Umatilla, said they

had already been offering paper bags as an option and selling reusable bags. They also just purchased mesh bags that customers can use for produce.

“We’re not sure yet how we’ll handle the meat department yet,” he said, noting the potential sanitation concerns of raw meat products leaking onto other groceries.

The new law will likely drive a large increase in demand for paper bags, which Mead said he hoped would not cause a shortage. He said her understood the environmental concerns behind the law, but most stores have been using plastic because it’s cheaper.

“This is a cost of doing business, and it gets passed on,” he said.

Plastic bags are a major source of waterway pollution and often turn up in the stomachs of dead sea turtles, dolphins and whales. Concern about their effects on wildlife and the environment in general have led 127 countries to ban or tax single-use grocery bags, according to the United Nations.

In the United States, California, Hawaii and New York have already enacted bans. Some individual cities in Oregon, such as Hood River, had previously banned the bags via city ordinance.

Brandt Koo, owner of the 11th Street Market in Hermiston, said he questioned how much the ban would really decrease pollution.

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Republicans threaten lawsuit in climate standoff

By **SARAH ZIMMERMAN AND GILLIAN FLACCUS**
Associated Press

SALEM — Republican state senators in Oregon continued to engage in a high-stakes game of brinkmanship Friday with Democratic lawmakers, saying they are prepared to sue if the governor goes through with her threat to impose a \$500 fine for each day they delay a vote on a landmark climate plan that would be the second of its kind nationwide.

“We will file legal action,” said Sen. Tim Knopp, a Republican from Bend who has said he has been in three states in the past three days. “If they were trying to bring us back, threatening to arrest us and impose fines isn’t going to work.”

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown deployed the state police Thursday to try to round up 11 Republican senators who fled the Legislature — and in some cases, the state — to thwart the passage of a cap-and-trade proposal that would dramatically lower greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The minority GOP caucus wants the plan to be sent to voters instead of being instituted by lawmakers — but negotiations with Democrats collapsed, leading to the headline-grabbing walkout.

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Round-Up plans new construction after 2019 rodeo

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Like every other stage of the Pendleton Round-Up’s expansion, the association’s approach to its latest development has been careful and methodical.

The Round-Up Association announced in June 2018 that intended to use the former Albertsons property for an expanded parking lot and a new retail/administrative building.

The vacated grocery store’s demolition before the September rodeo made way for the larger parking lot, but there’s been no construction activity since then.

Round-Up President Dave O’Neill explained that the board of directors, staff,

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Reese oversaw school budget during tough times

Longtime Pendleton School District business manager died earlier this month

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Those who knew Bob Reese say the longtime Pendleton School District business manager wasn’t afraid to face tough financial facts.

Reese, who died this month at age 77 from a neurological disease, was cool and accurate, but also human and approachable.

During Reese’s final year at the district before retiring in 2009, he shepherded to completion a cut-to-the-bone budget that addressed a brutal projected shortfall of \$3.8 million. Under his guidance, the board trimmed 19 positions, froze cost-of-living adjustments and cut 10 days from the school year. At one of the meetings, the even-keel Reese looked uncharacteristically downhearted.

“We have to play the cards we are dealt,” he

told the board. “You don’t spend money you don’t have.”

It was a role that could have cast Reese as a sort of economic grim reaper, but didn’t.

“He was patient and caring and a true gentleman,” said former Pendleton School Superintendent Al Meunier.

Michelle Jones, who worked for Reese and succeeded him, said people perceived that Reese had their backs, even during the toughest of times.

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