

Mattila could have hands free during manslaughter trial

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — John McKenzie Mattila of Weston could have his hands free of cuffs for his manslaughter trial.

Mattila made his first courtroom appearance in the case Friday during a lengthy hearing to argue motions at the Umatilla County Courthouse, Pendleton, with Circuit Judge Jon Lieuallen presiding. Wearing blue jailhouse clothes, which note he is an inmate worker, courthouse security shackled Mattila’s legs and hands. That drew an objection from his attorney, Jody Stutsman Vaughan of Pendleton.

She argued Mattila should at least have his hands free to write notes to her during the proceeding, and if he acted out, courthouse security were just feet away. Deputy district attorney Daniel Pachico agreed Mattila should not have been in shackles, stating the court had yet to determine if there was a need for the



John Mattila looks toward his attorney during a motions hearing Friday morning at the Umatilla County Courthouse. The state has accused Mattila of driving drunk the night of Feb. 22 and crashing into and killing Adelaida “Lolly” Solis Torres, 52, of Milton-Freewater.

extra security measures of the shackles.

But Lieuallen noted Mattila’s size — the Umatilla County Jail’s inmate roster states he stands 6 feet 5 inches and weighs 260 pounds — as well as his words and actions the night of his arrest Feb. 22 in the wake of a fatal crash.

Mattila refused to allow

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

going to jail, he shoved an officer aside and tried to run. Gunter zapped Mattila with a stun gun to put him on the ground and shocked him twice more to make him comply with putting on handcuffs.

“I’m not going to have fighting and rolling around in the courtroom,” Lieuallen warned before granting permission for Mattila to have his right hand free. The judge also said he was likely to let Mattila have both hands free at trial, but the leg shackles would stay on.

Vaughan also told the court she was concerned about the pre-trial publicity in the case. Lieuallen said he shared the concern and advised *East Oregonian* reporters to cover the case in a “professional manner.”

The judge noted nothing indicated the *EO* was not doing so already.

The state has accused Mattila, 24, of driving drunk the evening of Feb. 22 and killing Adelaida Solis Torres in a car crash on Highway 11 near Weston.

She was 52 and worked for the Oregon Department of Human Services. She was driving a state vehicle at the time. Mattila has pleaded not guilty to charges of manslaughter, hit-and-run on an injured person, driving under the influence of intoxicants and more.

Vaughan filed several motions in the case, including to suppress the derogatory comments Mattila made about the victim and the assertion Gunter lacked probable cause to make the arrest in the first place.

She also filed a motion Thursday to push back Mattila’s trial date, which the court set for Nov. 4-8. Vaughan stated she needed more time for investigation. She also told the court Pachico does not object to the motion to delay the trial, but indicated that he would ask the court not to set a new date until after the defense stated it concluded the investigation.

The hearing plodded well into the afternoon, and Lieuallen had yet to issue rulings in the proceeding.

Health educator coming to Umatilla County

New position will focus on investigating communicable diseases, education

By JESSICA POLLARD
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Umatilla County Public Health Department will start looking for applicants to fill a new health educator position.

The full-time health educator position was approved by county commissioners earlier this week.

The work will involve local health data analysis, communicable disease

investigations and education on the prevention of communicable diseases, such as sexually transmitted infections and measles.

“We have a fair amount of communicable diseases in our community,” said Public Health Department Deputy Director Alisha Southwick. “We’ve had positions like this before, but it will be a little different. This is going to be a full-time person, whose focus is on education and epidemiology.”

She said that in the past, nurses and environmental health staff have been responsible for disease investigations in addition to regular duties, while it’s a primary focus for the health educator.

The educational component of the job will initially focus on educating and providing consultations to health care providers about diseases. But Southwick said that possibly over time, the person might be involved with schools or other public facilities.

Southwick said the department plans on posting the job in the next few weeks, and hopes to hire someone as soon as possible.

The position will be funded using modernization grant money from the Oregon Health Authority, which became available this month.

“I think the most exciting thing about this is that

it’s made possible through this modernization grant,” Southwick said.

The funds total \$202,425, and are part of a \$15 million OHA investment approved by the Oregon Legislature this year.

Of that money, \$7 million was distributed among Oregon counties to help increase equity, leadership, epidemiology and communicable disease control for the biennium.

In 2017, the OHA used a \$5 million legislative investment to implement regional health partnerships, resulting in the creation of the Eastern Oregon Modernization Collaborative with a budget of \$495,000 for the biennium.

Pendleton faces \$87K fine for pollution

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The city of Pendleton is working to reduce an \$86,977 fine for environmental violations during the construction of the new fire house.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality gave the city a permit in March 2018 to discharge storm water during the construction of the fire house at 1455 S.E. Court Ave. Per the permit, the city was responsible for implementing an erosion and sediment control plan.

But during a visit in late March, according to the DEQ, state regulators found the city had not put best practices in

place to control erosion. The city also violated the permit when it failed to visually monitor storm water runoff during active construction.

The DEQ issued the penalty on Sept. 25. Pendleton Public Works Director Bob Patterson said the almost \$87,000 figure came as a surprise and city went to work immediately to address the oversight and put the erosion control practices in place.

He also said city attorney Nancy Kerns is working to appeal the size of the fine. The Department of Environmental Quality allows violators 20 days to request to ask for a hearing to dispute any allegations. Those hearings can result in lower fines.

BRIEFLY

Hermiston shop fire involves one home

HERMISTON — A shop fire on Northeast Magpie Lane caused extensive damage to a home on the same property Wednesday night.

Umatilla Fire District 1 dispatched to the scene after 9 p.m. to find a two-car shop completely involved in flames. The home was occupied by a woman who firefighters evacuated and treated for smoke inhalation.

There were no injuries.

According to Battalion Chief Corey Gorham, the fire eventually spread underneath the house, into the house’s attic and to some of the rooms adjacent to the shop.

Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District provided mutual aid to the scene, and most units cleared the scene before midnight. A single unit remained on scene throughout the night to keep an eye on the area.

Gorham said the cause of the fire is still under investigation.

Pendleton to host Eastern Oregon Career Summit

PENDLETON — Pendleton High School’s annual career day has been revamped and expanded this year.

Dubbed the Eastern Oregon Career Summit, a group of several local organizations, including Eastern Oregon Business Source, Umatilla County, and the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce organized the Wednesday event as a part of the Pendleton Schools to Careers program.

In the morning, high school students from across the county will gather at Pendleton High School to hear from 70 professionals about their industries.

Simultaneously, the Pendleton Convention Center will host seminars for employers on topics like the “multi-generational workforce” and how to become a “workplace of choice” in a low-unemployment job market.

Both parties will be at the convention center from noon to 6:30 p.m. to connect employers with both adult job seekers and high school students.

Umatilla County Public Transportation will also be on hand to provide information on local public transportation options for people looking for ways to get to their jobs.

Mountain biker rescued from Umatilla National Forest

MILTON-FREEWATER — Umatilla County Search and Rescue responded to an injured mountain biker stranded on Bear Creek Trail in the Umatilla National Forest Wednesday night.

Search and Rescue received a call regarding the 25-year-old man, from Touchet, Washington, at 7:18 p.m. During a mountain biking trip with a friend, his bike pedal clipped a rock. He catapulted over the bike, injuring his head and chest.

The man — whose name was not released by the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office — was unable to hike out unassisted, according to a press release.

Around 12:45 a.m. Thursday, he was located and wheeled out of the forest by 4:50 a.m. He declined ambulance service, leaving the area by private vehicle.

Because of the remote location, Search and Rescue used InReach Satellite to communicate via text. The sheriff’s office reported there were several hazards on the trail, including rain that created hazardous footing and deep drop-

offs along the trail.

Nine people from Search and Rescue, two people from Walla Walla Search and Rescue, and two emergency responders from Milton-Freewater provided aid during the incident.

Vincent Vargas to speak at BMCC

PENDLETON — The Blue Mountain Community College Veterans Resource Center welcomes Vincent Vargas.

The Hollywood actor-writer will speak Friday, Oct. 25 at 1 p.m. in ST-200 in the Science & Technology Building on the BMCC Pendleton campus. The event is free and open to the public. In addition, a free lunch will precede the presentation at noon.

Known for his role in FX’s “The Mayans,” writing and acting in the short film “The Long Way Back” and the TV series “Dads in Parks,” Vargas will share about his transition back from military active duty to civilian life.

Vargas is a 15-year veteran of three combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan with the 75th Ranger Regiment’s 2nd Battalion based at Joint Base Lewis-McCord, Washington. He has vaulted to fame as an actor, writer, producer, blogger, podcaster, poet, business entrepreneur and social media personality by publicly sharing his Army, work and personal experiences with brutal honesty. His presentation will focus on his transition back from active duty to civilian life, and the challenges that came with that.

For more information, contact Casey White-Zollman, vice president of college relations & advancement, at 541-278-5839 or cwhitezollman@bluecc.edu. For more about Vargas, visit www.vinnyrocc.com.



Vargas

Forest Service seeks comments on tree thinning project near Troy

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — The Walla Walla Ranger

District of the Umatilla National Forest seeks public comment on a plan to remove swaths of insect-infested trees.

The purpose of the Elbow Insect and Disease Project is to reduce the risk and extent of the ongoing insect infestation approximately 9 miles west of Troy. The project proposes to remove trees in several ways, including burning, from as much as 2,600 acres within a 15,600-acre project boundary.

“There is a need to reduce stand densities to increase the vitality of the leave trees, in particular, large overstory early seral tree species,” according to the announcement from the Forest Service. “The reduced stand densities would decrease competition for moisture, light and nutrients.”

The Forest Service will accept written comments on this categorically excluded action until Nov. 18 to help refine the plan and identify ways to improve project design. The comment period is an opportunity for the public to be involved in the process and offer thoughts on alternative ways the Forest Service can accomplish the project’s purpose and need.

The Walla Walla Ranger District also will host two collaboration opportunities during the scoping period, including an open house Oct. 28, 3-5 p.m., at the Walla Walla Ranger District, 1415 W Rose St., Walla Walla, and a public field trip to the project area on Oct. 29. For those interested in attending the field trip, please contact the Walla Walla Ranger District at 509-522-6290 by Oct. 25.

For additional information about the Elbow Project, contact Joseph Sciarino at 509-522- 6283 or visit the project website at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57017>.

Additional information about the Umatilla National Forest is available at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla>.

— *East Oregonian staff*

Free presentation

Living Well with Parkinson’s Disease

Building your Care Team, Importance of Exercise, Nutrition, Socialization, Self-Care, and Education
By Parkinson’s Resources Central Oregon
Program Coordinator, Carol Pfeil and client with PD

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22
3-4:30 PM - St Anthony Hospital
Conference rooms 1 & 2
2801 St Anthony Way, Pendleton

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