

## Hidden Blues



A barn sits in contrast with the Blue Mountains, shrouded in a fog of rain and clouds, early on Wednesday afternoon near Pendleton.

# No Airport Road hearing set yet

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Umatilla County has put an Airport Road construction project out to bid, but no hearing date has been set regarding a petition by neighboring property owners to vacate 13 feet of right-of-way along the road.

Engineering work for the project, which would widen and improve the road to better handle traffic in and out of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, turned up a discrepancy between where property owners had previously been told their property line was and where the true property lines run. Some owners have fences, trees or other assets sitting on the 13 feet that actually belongs to

the county.

County Commissioner Bill Elfering said he couldn't say much on the issue, because neighbor Chris Waine has involved attorneys. But he said that the county previously met with each of the neighbors along the road about their concerns, and made official offers of mitigation or temporary use licenses. In many cases, neighbors will be able to keep using the right-of-way, Elfering said.

"We're trying to disrupt their life as little as possible," he said.

He said at the time, the neighbors the county had talked to had seemed satisfied with the compromises it worked out with each of them.

Waine gathered signa-

tures to support asking the county to vacate the 13 feet, however, and turn it over to the neighbors. He said he has been disappointed by the county's handling of the issue, and the fact that they had not taken any action so far on the petition.

"I think the county's doing the wrong thing," he said.

He has also questioned whether the county's survey department is correct about property boundaries, and said there are discrepancies between the legal description of his property, physical measurements he has taken, county records and other elements.

"The county says, 'This is what we say and ultimately we're right,' but I think this is a situation where there could

be multiple truths," Waine said, calling it "a mess."

Waine continues to gather as much information he can about past surveying and property lines in the area, but said he doesn't know what he will do yet.

In the meantime, the county is putting the project out to bid and plans to complete it before the 2020 Umatilla County Fair in August at EOTEC. During the board of commissioners' Jan. 15 meeting, public works director Tom Fellows told commissioners he was confident that the \$1 million from the Legislature for the project would cover the work planned for Airport Road, but he isn't sure how much money might be available to pave part of Ott Road on the other side of EOTEC.

# County approves Stanfield-Echo enterprise zone

By ALEX CASTLE  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — A pair of western Umatilla County communities are getting their own enterprise zone.

Once included in a joint zone with Umatilla, the cities of Echo and Stanfield will have their own tool to stimulate business in the area starting Feb. 5 after the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners approved the designation on Wednesday.

"This zone is looking down the road for future development," Echo City Administrator David Slaght said. "It's some enticement and encouragement for investors. We're right along I-84. We've got access to interstate commerce right at our front door."

Enterprise zones allow certain industrial and manufacturing construction projects to be granted a three- to five-year property tax exemption. The Stanfield-Echo zone will span a total of 4.44 square miles and include the city limits and urban growth boundaries of both cities. Language in the designation permits



The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners approved the creation of a Stanfield-Echo enterprise zone during their meeting on Wednesday morning.

hotels, motels and destination resorts to be included in the potential tax exemptions as well.

Both cities were previously included in an enterprise zone with Umatilla, which was revised in 2019 to add areas along Umatilla's urban growth boundary and excluded Stanfield and Echo.

Shortly after Umatilla redrew the zone, Slaght was hired by the city of Echo in May and Ben Burgener was brought in as the city manager of Stanfield

in September.

"Both of us were brand new to our jobs, and when we stepped in we realized they had essentially excluded us and left us out here alone," Slaght said of the previous enterprise zone.

Slaght said it made sense and was more feasible for the cities to work together in applying for the zone designation.

In Echo, Slaght said the city council is working with potential local investors and are in the process of devel-

oping strategies and goals for the new zone.

However, Slaght said the language allowing hotel, motel or destination resort projects to be eligible for tax exemptions could be crucial for a future development along the interstate led by Kent Madison.

In 2017, Madison first came to the city with an idea for a 132-acre development that would include dozens of homes, a hotel, RV park, commercial and industrial projects and even some greenery.

According to Slaght, Madison has approached the city about continuing the project, but plenty remains to be done for it to materialize.

"I don't know where it's going, but I didn't want to leave that off the table," Slaght said.

The cities had to seek and eventually received consent from the Port of Umatilla for the designation, and the zone was additionally co-sponsored by the county.

"I think it gives them flexibility with it and ownership of it," Commissioner Bill Elfering said at Wednesday's meeting.

## BRIEFLY

### Mobile homes bill signed into law

SALEM — Some mobile home owners are a step closer to gaining financial aid for their housing since Gov. Kate Brown signed House Bill 2896 into law last week.

The bill, chiefly sponsored in part by Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, and Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens, last year funnels \$9.5 million to nonprofit corporations to create manufactured dwelling preservation and replacement programs for older, less insulated homes.

Umatilla Electric Cooperative supported the bill during the last legislative session, and is taking steps to create a program in its service area.

"We'd like to help our customers by identifying older mobile homes," UEC Member Services Administrator Steve Meyers said. "If we can help replace those with (new) mobile homes, it's not just going to help customers potentially save hundreds of dollars a month, it will help sustain our communities."

Meyers added that the process of establishing a program could take months. The cooperative is seeking community partners and federal backing. He said individuals interested in receiving an update on progress can call Umatilla Electric at 541-567-6414.

The bill also stipulates that Oregon's Housing and Community Services Department establishes an advisory board. Public affairs director for the department, Kenny LaPoint, told the *East Oregonian*

week will determine if Morgan will be required to stand trial.

### Hermiston Warming Station sets training sessions

HERMISTON — The Hermiston Warming Station has announced a new series of volunteer training sessions after the emergency shelter had to stay closed on Sunday due to insufficient volunteers.

Volunteers must be 18 or older and pass a background check. After completing one of the sessions, they will have access to an online schedule to sign up for any open shifts on any dates they are interested in.

Training sessions, held at the warming station at 1075 S. Highway 395, will be as follows:

- Friday, 6-7 p.m.
- Saturday, 3-4 p.m.
- Sunday, 9-10 a.m.
- Monday, 6-7 p.m.
- Tuesday, 5-6 p.m.
- Wednesday, 6-7 p.m.
- Jan. 30, 5-6 p.m.

### Blue Mountain Land Trust asks for public input

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — The Blue Mountain Land Trust seeks public input on its 2020-24 Conservation Plan that will guide its conservation efforts in Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties in Washington, and in Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union and Wheeler counties in Oregon.

The Blue Mountain Land Trust in a news release asked the public to take an online survey to assist updating the plan. The survey is online at [survey.sogosurvey.com/r/3eVTK8](https://survey.sogosurvey.com/r/3eVTK8) and closes Friday, Feb. 7. The purpose of the conservation plan is to guide the Land Trust's priorities for the next five years and to identify strategies for advancing those priorities. The Land Trust will finalize the plan in March.

"The plan provides direction to the Land Trust's board and staff to ensure that we spend our resources in ways that produce the greatest possible conservation gains in our region," according to the news release.

The Blue Mountain Land Trust is a not-for-profit organization that protects and enhances farm and ranches, wildlife habitat and waterways in the Blue Mountain region. For more information, visit [www.bmlt.org](http://www.bmlt.org), email [bmlt@bmlt.org](mailto:bmlt@bmlt.org) or call 541-620-5754.

— EO Media Group

### Irrigon man arrested for attempted arson

HERMISTON — An Irrigon man is facing felony charges after reportedly throwing a Molotov cocktail in a Hermiston neighborhood.

Hermiston police arrested Jeremiah Michael Morgan, 20, on Sunday evening. Law enforcement officials said it is believed that Morgan threw a homemade incendiary device on top of a garage on East Browning Avenue before fleeing on foot.

It is also believed that Morgan knew the male victim in the case, and that the action was part of a continuing dispute.

The district attorney's office formally charged Morgan with attempted first-degree arson, a Class B felony; unlawful possession and manufacture of a destructive device, both Class C felonies; and recklessly endangering another person, a misdemeanor.

Court documents assert Morgan attempted to start a fire or cause an explosion, but it doesn't appear the incident caused any damage or physical injury.

Morgan was still lodged at the Umatilla County Jail as of Wednesday afternoon. A probable cause preliminary hearing next

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Thank you to everyone who sent cards, flowers or donations for MIKE ROBINSON and for all that came to the gathering.

A special thank you to Ken Huber of Burns Mortuary and the doctors and nurses who cared for Mike.

MaryJo Robinson and family

1/23

Cineplex Show Times

\$5 Classic Movie  
Showing Wednesday @ 12p  
Joe Versus the Volcano

Dolittle (PG)  
4:40p 7:00p 9:20p

Bad Boys for Life (R)  
4:20p 7:10p 9:50p

1917 (R)  
4:10p 6:50p 9:30p

Like a Boss (R)  
4:50p 7:20p 9:40p

Jumanji: The Next Level (PG13)  
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