

Feds announce \$1 million in emergency repair funds

By ALEX CASTLE
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — The U.S. Department of Transportation announced the availability of \$1 million in “quick-release” emergency funds Tuesday for federally eligible highways and bridges in Eastern Oregon that need repairs following severe flooding earlier this month, according to a press release.

“These funds are a critical first step in helping Oregon restore immediate transportation needs for communities in the areas affected by flooding,” said Federal Highway Administrator Nicole R. Nason.

The emergency funds will be used to reimburse the Oregon Department of Transportation for emergency repairs and work to prevent further damage throughout Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties.

Tom Strandberg, a spokesman for ODOT, said the funds are likely to be allocated to ongoing repairs along Interstate 84 between exits 182 and 188, where floodwaters eroded the foundation and caused the shoulder to collapse along the westbound lanes. Traffic in that zone has been reduced to one eastbound and westbound lane, and is under a speed restriction.

Strandberg said there is also maintenance work



Crews work to repair the shoulder of Interstate 84 near Milepost 187 outside of Stanfield on Wednesday afternoon.

being done on a bridge along I-84 near Pendleton at exit 209, though it is expected to cause minimal, if any, traffic delays.

ODOT is also focusing on Highway 204 between Weston and Elgin, which is currently down to one lane between milepost 26 and 37 with a pilot car escorting traffic back and forth. This project remains challenging due to snow accumulation in the area, Strandberg said, and is unlikely to be completed until after the spring.

There was progress on Wednesday afternoon though, with ODOT announcing in a press release that the 11 miles of impacted road on Highway 204 is now open to commercial trucks, which were previously unable to travel

along that stretch.

The funds are a “down payment on the costs of short-term repairs” as assessments continue to determine what long-term repairs are needed, the release said. As of Wednesday, Strandberg said he hadn’t heard an update on where those assessments were and whether ODOT was approaching an overall estimated cost in damages from the floods.

“They’re still crunching all those numbers and making sure everything is accounted for,” he said.

Once those numbers have been collected, Strandberg said they will be sent off to the state and federal government to see what additional financial assistance may be available.

Helix student ventures to Salem as an honorary page

By JESSICA POLLARD
East Oregonian

HELIX — Robby Garrett was surprised to meet Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens, at his church over winter break last year. He was even more surprised when the lawmaker invited him to apply to work as an honorary page on the Oregon Senate floor in Salem.

“I had no clue,” said Garrett, a seventh-grade student at Helix Community School. “I thought, I can’t miss school.”

But at the urging of his mom, Carolyn, Garrett jumped at the opportunity. And in early February, he found himself on a road trip to the Oregon Capitol to spend a Monday opening doors and delivering messages for some of Oregon’s politicians during the short session.

“We had one heck of a time getting out there,” said Carolyn.

The family had to navigate their way out of the Helix area while avoiding high floodwaters and damaged roadways brought on by the flooding that hit on Feb. 6. They had to reroute through the Tri-Cities.

And even before that, Carolyn said, the trip was nearly postponed the week before amid the possibility of a Senate Republican walkout over the most recent cap-and-trade legislation on the table.

Garrett, 13, plays basketball, loves social studies classes and has a keen interest in history. Though he has a quiet demeanor, his favorite part of being a page was calling senators to attention on Feb. 10 by shouting “vote” for everyone to hear.

“It’s embarrassing the first time,” he said. “But the second time, I scared



Helix Middle School student Robby Garrett, 13, presents a flag, flown over the Oregon Capitol, to Helix Principal Darrick Cope at the school on Wednesday morning in Helix. Garrett recently returned from working as a page for Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens, in Salem.

a guy.”

Indeed, one senator, who was on his phone before the vote, jumped in his seat.

As a page, Garrett had to open the Senate Chamber doors and greet incoming lawmakers. He also helped pass notes and laid copies of legislation out on each senator’s desk.

“Everything was moving so fast,” he said. “You have to do a lot of things.”

There was also, he said, a lot of standing during the session.

“It was stressful at times,” he said. “Everybody was watching.”

And while the floor maintained decorum during the session, Garrett said, just outside the heavy Senate Chamber doors lawmakers chattered about hot-topic legislation before and after the morning session.

“There was a lot of conflict, a lot of back-and-forth,” he said. “They get a lot of work done in the hallway.”

Carolyn, a former teacher herself, bought a flag at the Capitol gift shop

to bring back to the Helix School District.

When workers at the Capitol caught wind of that, they strung the newly purchased flag up a pole in front of the building before packaging it up for the Garretts to bring home.

At a brief presentation on Wednesday, Garrett shared his experience with the rest of his seventh-grade class and presented the flag to Helix Principal Darrick Cope. It will be hung inside the school.

Would he recommend his peers try being an honorary page for a day?

“Yes and no at the same time,” he said. “If they get bored easily, then no. But for people that don’t, you get to learn a lot. It’s exciting.”

Although, the experience hasn’t quite sparked a passion for lawmaking in Garrett. At least not yet.

“I’m not a politics person,” he said. “I’ve known it for a long time.”

Robby hopes to pursue archeology in Northeast Oregon instead.

“I like discovering things,” he said.

Councilors want crackdown on Edwards Apartments owner

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The owner of Edwards Apartments offered to sell his 602 S.E. Dorion Ave. property to the city, but some Pendleton city councilors seemed more intent on making the blighted building a target for code enforcement than readying the purchase paperwork.

At a meeting Tuesday, the council talked about Edwards Apartments at length before adjourning into executive session to discuss it some more. The council didn’t take any action once members emerged from behind closed doors, but several councilors encouraged staff to use the city’s civil code to compel action from the owner.

City Attorney Nancy Kerns provided a brief history of the property, which the city shut down in 2011 amid frequent calls for service and public health and safety hazards.

The building has stayed vacant while it changed hands a few times, eventually landing in the hands of Joe Bachmeier of Pendleton.

Bachmeier told the council in January that he soon realized that the former apartment complex needed more work than he was able to do, and he offered to sell it to the city for demolition or redevelopment for \$50,000.

Kerns said Bachmeier has taken steps to gut the interior of the building, and even got permits to do electrical work in the facility, although it’s still without power.

Given that the building remains unoccupied and sealed off from public access, Kerns said there was little in the dangerous buildings code the city could use to cite Bachmeier besides a provision that prohibits property owners from boarding



The Pendleton City Council talked about Edwards Apartments, at the corner of Southeast Dorion Avenue and Southeast Sixth Street in Pendleton, at length Tuesday during its city council meeting before adjourning into executive session to discuss it some more. The council didn’t take any action once members emerged from behind closed doors, but several councilors encouraged staff to use the city’s civil code to compel action from the owner. The complex, which was constructed in 1909, has sat vacant since it was deemed uninhabitable by the city in 2011.

up windows for longer than 90 days.

As long as the building isn’t a threat to public safety or health, Kerns said the city has to respect private property rights that are spelled out by Oregon state law and the Constitution.

Councilor Chuck Wood pushed back against Kerns’ argument, distributing photos that showed some gaps in the building where people could get in.

“It bothers me immensely that we don’t take a more aggressive stance on these things,” he said.

Wood drew agreement from councilors Becky Marks and Paul Chalmers, who questioned Kerns’ hesitation to cite the building owner.

“It sends the message that there’s nothing the city can do about it,” he said.

Councilor Carole Innes agreed that something needed to be done about Edwards, but added that the city would need to crack down on all the prominent

blighted properties and not just the dilapidated apartment complex.

Bachmeier did not return a phone message requesting comment on Wednesday.

While the council didn’t take any official action Tuesday, Kerns wrote in an email Wednesday that “code enforcement personnel will investigate the matter and proceed according to the results.”

If the city decides to begin citing Bachmeier, the city’s action could lead to fines and liens for various code violations. Any citation could be contested in Pendleton Municipal Court.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

ALASKA, WASHINGTON, OREGON, IDAHO, MONTANA

REACH 3 million Pacific Northwesterners with just One Call!

■ PNDC CLASSIFIED - Daily Newspapers
29 newspapers - 1,187,980 circulation
Number of words: 25 • Extra word cost: \$10
Cost: \$540 (Runs 3 consecutive days including wks.)

■ PNND 2x2 DISPLAY - Daily Newspapers
27 newspapers - 1,016,864 circulation
Size: 2x2 (3.25"x2") Cost: 1x 2x2: \$1,050

More info: Cecelia@cnpa.com or call (916) 288-6011

PNPA Pacific Northwest Newspaper Association

WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO

2/20
Cineplex Show Times

\$5 Classic Movie
Showing Wednesday @ 12p
Pork Chop Hill

Sonic the Hedgehog (PG)
4:50p 7:10p 9:30p

Fantasy Island (PG13)
4:10p 6:50p 9:20p

Downhill (R)
4:30p 6:40p 8:50p

Birds of Prey (R)
4:40p 7:20p 9:50p

Bad Boys for Life (R)
4:20p 7:00p 9:40p

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

TAMÁSTSLIKT CULTURAL INSTITUTE

Open House

Thursday, February 27 4pm-7pm

Our Doors Are Open! The building is all spiffed up and ready to welcome you back! We spent all of January on repairs, needed maintenance, and exhibit upgrades. And to celebrate, we invite you to our Open House on Thursday, February 27!

- Free admission
- Meet the Tamástslíkt Trust Board of Directors
- Get a peak into the vaults
- See the changes in the Permanent Gallery
- View the 2020 ArtWORKz Junior Art Show & Competition
- Play stick games
- Win a Huckleberry Pie in the Cakewalk
- Kids will have fun in the Kids' Area
- Complimentary snacks and beverages

VISIT THE MUSEUM AT
TAMÁSTSLIKT CULTURAL INSTITUTE

FIRST FRIDAYS ARE FREE!
Exhibits, Museum Store Open Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm
Kinship Café Open 11am-2pm
I-84E, Exit 216 | www.tamastslíkt.org | 541.429.7700