

# City, BMCC work on public projects

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Private sector activity may have slowed down, but public projects are still moving forward, particularly at Pendleton City Hall and Blue Mountain Community College.

Late last week, work crews from Silver Creek Contracting began working on repairing the staircases to the Vert Auditorium, which was jointly funded by the Pendleton Development Commission and a state grant that was obtained by the Pendleton Downtown Association.

Members of the Pendleton City Council approved the nearly \$103,000 project last year, but the project has been gestating for months as the city figured out what the grant would and wouldn't cover, according to a report from commission Associate Director Charles Denight.

The project now covers the repair of the crumbling steps that lead to the Vert's main entrance and the Southwest Fourth Street entrance, in addition to a disability access ramp.

The old staircases were heavily damaged from years of weathering deicing chemicals. Acting as the development commission, the council will consider adding \$5,400 to its local match for the contractor to install heating coils underneath the entrance steps to keep the steps clear during the winter without use of salt or other chemicals.

Facilities Manager Glenn Graham said the city is using the opportunity of Silver Creek being on-site to have crews do work outside the grant around the city hall block.

Graham said some of the other projects include an access ramp to the Pendleton Recreation Center, some brick removal near the rec center, and new stairs to the Foundation Room.

While the pandemic has negatively affected residents and businesses around Pendleton, Graham said the slowdown has actually worked to the advantage of the city



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

**Piles of concrete debris sit in front of the Vert Auditorium in Pendleton on Monday morning as workers begin to remove the stairs and side-walks around the building.**



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

**The derelict tennis courts at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton sit partially demolished on Monday morning as the college begins to remove the unused courts.**

hall projects because there's less foot traffic to deal with.

Graham said the deadline for the grant-funded projects is June 27, but he anticipates the work will be done well in advance.

Across town at BMCC, the college is tearing down its tennis court rather than trying to repair it.

Casey White-Zollman, BMCC's vice president of college relations and advancement, said the court had been inactive for about a decade and had become a bit of an "eyesore."

White-Zollman said BMCC

maintenance crews are handling the demolition while Pendleton Electric is removing the light poles from the court.

In exchange for keeping the light poles for itself, White-Zollman said Pendleton Electric is doing new lighting for the road leading up to the college and the BMCC sign.

"We're taking advantage of some good timing," she said.

Once the court is gone, White-Zollman said the college plans to leave the ground bare and let it return to a grassy area.

## BRIEFLY

### Studded tire deadline extended until May 15

SALEM — Oregon drivers will not be required to remove studded tires until 11:59 p.m. Friday, May 15. The deadline had previously been extended from April 1 to May 1.

While studded tires are allowed in Oregon by law from Nov. 1 through March 31, the Oregon Department of Transportation decided to again extend that deadline in response to the continuing public health emergency of COVID-19.

ODOT encourages drivers to have their studded tires removed before May 15 if it can reasonably be done while maintaining social distancing.

### Three new positive cases identified in Umatilla County

UMATILLA COUNTY — Three more cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Umatilla County, according to a press release from Umatilla County Public Health.

The three latest people diagnosed with the novel coronavirus had connections to previous cases, the county confirmed. All three cases are recovering at home in self-isolation. There are still no reported deaths from coronavirus in Umatilla County.

The county also reported that 12 of the previously reported cases are considered recovered. Individuals are considered recovered when they have been free of symptoms, including fever, cough and shortness of breath, for 72 hours. The county said there are 15 cases that remain active and one individual, remains hospitalized.

Umatilla County's 27 positive cases come from a total of 479 tests.

### Kayak Public Transit pushes closure to April 25

PENDLETON — The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation are extending the closure of Kayak Public Transit due to COVID-19 until April 25, a press release said.

The tribes will continue to monitor the situation and will make a

determination about the following week on or before April 24, the release said.

The closure — in response to COVID-19 — started on Monday, March 23.

"Kayak recognizes its role as a lifeline for access to employment, medical and shopping needs throughout the region and we do not take this action lightly," the release said.

Kayak Public Transit operates three fixed routes and four commuter bus services in Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon, including La Grande, Hermiston and Walla Walla, Washington.

### COVID-19 business assistance program closes Thursday

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Development Commission's economic relief program for small businesses is now open, but the application window is closing quickly.

The deadline for the commission's Pendleton Retail and Hospitality Relief Program is Thursday, and businesses will have to meet a very specific set of criteria to be one of the 50 entities selected for the \$2,000 grant.

Requirements include:

- A Pendleton business license
  - Location in the urban renewal district — downtown Pendleton and some of the surrounding area
  - Negative impact from one of the governor's executive orders shutting down or curtailing business operations to slow the spread of COVID-19
  - Must employ the equivalent of 20 positions or less
  - Either has applied for or commits to apply for small business assistance from the state or federal government
  - Will either remain open or reopen no later than July 1
  - Nonprofits are not eligible
- "Essential" businesses like restaurants, retail and hospitality will be prioritized, and if the city receives more applications than its \$100,000 budget, the winning applicants will be selected by lottery on Friday.

Applications are available in a rack near the entrance of the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce, 501 S. Main St.

—EO Media Group

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# 5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Always call 8-1-1 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:

Source: call811.com



**Know what's below. Call before you dig.**

## 1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

## 2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.



## 3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



## 4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



## 5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



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