



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

A protester holds a sign in opposition of the restamping of sidewalks with Confederate names along Southeast Byers Avenue during a city council meeting in Pendleton on Dec. 1, 2020.

# Council bans sidewalk stamp preservation

Mayor: Vote shows city is responsive to the concerns of its residents

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The city of Pendleton will preserve sidewalk stamps no more.

At a Tuesday, Jan. 19, meeting, the Pendleton City Council unanimously voted to amend the city's historic preservation ordinance to specifically prohibit the preservation of sidewalk stamps, defined as "lettering imprinted in historic sidewalks indicating street names, dates or the name of the installing contractor," in the ordinance. The council's vote follows up on Mayor John Turner's December 2020 decision to halt the reinstallation or restamp of four sidewalk stamps commemorating Confederate figures.

At the meeting, Turner said the council's vote was an indication the city was responsive to the concerns of its residents, but for Joshua Walker, it was "too little, too late."

In November 2020, Walker broke a Jefferson Davis stamp and nailed in a pro-Black Lives Matter sign to it as an act of protest, leading to a misdemeanor criminal mischief charge.

Walker said he had planned to speak at the Jan. 19 meeting, where he would read aloud excerpts from Martin Luther King Jr.'s writings and speeches that criticized America's economic and racial systems, and encouraged solidarity and organization. But as the meeting started, Walker got into an argument with Turner over Walker taking his hat off, a longtime infor-



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

A concrete block referencing Jeff Davis Street sits on the sidewalk on Southeast 11th Street in Pendleton on Nov. 11, 2020. The block, and others referencing the original Pendleton street names, were removed during the reconstruction of Southeast Byers Avenue and the surrounding sidewalks.

mal council chamber rule under Turner. Walker said a police officer attempted to escort him out of the room, but he left voluntarily.

Walker said he regretted the incident, but he maintained the council's failure to act on the Confederate stamps sooner was evidence of "microaggression" and even "macroaggression."

"In these times, you need to make strong decisions about what we can and cannot do," he said.

Walker's departure left activist Briana Spencer as the only member of the audience to speak for or against the ordinance.

Spencer said she appreciated the council's actions, but she urged the council to go further, including more outreach to marginalized communities.

Turner encouraged Spencer to join the Pendleton Historic Preservation Commission, the group that had originally decided to preserve the stamps, which were affected by street and sidewalk work being done along Southeast Byers Avenue. When Spencer said she was unsure if there was an available spot for her on the commission, Turner said he would make room for her.

# Bells toll in honor of COVID-19 victims

U.S. moves past 400,000 dead during pandemic

By BEN LONERGAN  
East Oregonian

MISSION — As Matt Henry stood alone in front of St. Andrew's Mission on Tuesday, Jan. 19, he checked his watch repeatedly.

As his watch ticked over to 2:30 p.m. the retired pastor reached up, grasped the rope hanging from the mission's bell and began to ring it. The sound of the bell rolled across the neighboring fields for four minutes as Henry rang it, the rhythm changing only briefly as he switched arms.

Henry said he rang the bell one minute for every hundred thousand people who have died as a result of COVID-19 in the United States. The U.S. COVID-19 death toll crossed 400,000 people on Jan. 19, according to *The Associated Press*.

"It's the right thing to do," he said.

The bell ringing was a part of a national movement to honor the victims of COVID-19 through a synchronized bell ringing beginning at 5:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Henry felt as though the moment was both one of unity and reflection on the last year, and



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Matt Henry rings the bell at St. Andrew's Mission in honor of those who have lost their lives to COVID-19 on Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021.

wanted to bring that to the church he attends.

"I knew it was going to be an isolated thing, but I asked the priest and he said it would be great," he said.

Henry, a retired pastor, likened the moment to one he experienced while serving as the pastor at the First United Methodist Church in Pendleton in the early 2000s. Henry said the church held a remembrance service for those killed in action as a result of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"We had a special requiem

service for the dead one night and it was just about 2,000 dead at that point," he said. "Three other people and I rang that [gong] for every name — we'd read a name and ring the gong — it was a fitting thing to do."

Henry said he felt it was important to find ways to honor those who have died and felt as though he could do his part by ringing the bell at St. Andrew's Mission as a sign of remembrance.

"I think we owe it to the dead — we owe something to the dead," he said.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Masked man reportedly attempts to rob Hermiston Subway

HERMISTON — Hermiston Police responded to a reported robbery on Saturday, Jan. 16, when employees at a Subway say a masked man entered the establishment at closing time and attempted to rob the business, according to Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston.

Officers were dispatched to the Subway at around 9 p.m. on Jan. 16. Upon arrival, they learned that the man, who allegedly wore a dark facemask, dark clothing and held a pocket knife, had entered the establishment and jumped over the counter while employees were closing the store.

The man then confronted an employee at the back of the store. The employee ran through the back door, and as she attempted to close the door behind her, the man barreled through, knocked her to the ground and fled.

Police are continuing to investigate the incident on counts of menacing and harassment, according to Edmiston.

"We would encourage all businesses to be very aware of their surroundings especially around closing," Edmiston said in an email to the newsroom.

### Snow is in the forecast

PENDLETON — The National Weather Service is forecasting a chance of snow reaching down into the lower elevations of Eastern Oregon on Thursday, Jan. 21, through Friday, Jan. 22.

The forecast predicts a 50% chance of snow in Pendleton on Jan. 21 and a 20% chance on Jan. 22, with a low of 29 degrees on Jan. 21. As of Jan. 20, the chance of snow for Hermiston was predicted at 40% on Jan. 21 and 20% on Jan. 22, with a low of 31 degrees on Jan. 21.

Accumulations through Pendleton, Hermiston and Boardman are expected to be less than 1 inch. Tollgate is expected to get between 3 and 4 inches, while Meacham is expected to see 1 to 2 inches.

### Hermiston Chamber CEO leaving

HERMISTON — Hermiston Chamber of Commerce CEO Kimberly Rill is stepping down on Feb. 12.

Rill said she has accepted a new position as the education and workforce training coordinator for the Port of Morrow. She has served as the chamber's director and CEO since April 2019.

"My time at the Hermiston Chamber has been wonderful and I look forward to staying in the region and continuing to support the business community in my new position," she said in a news release.

The chamber's board of directors announced they are accepting applications for the role immediately. A full job description will be posted to the chamber's website at [hermistonchamber.com](http://hermistonchamber.com) and resumes can be emailed to [resumes@hermistonchamber.com](mailto:resumes@hermistonchamber.com) by Feb. 5, 2021.

"Kim has been an exceptionally energetic and talented manager, and we are sorry to see her go," Board President Annette Kirkpatrick said in the news release. "We wish her all the best in her new position."

### Local bank names new chief operations officer

HEPPNER — The Bank of Eastern Oregon has named a new executive vice president and chief operations officer, according to a press release.

Becky Kindle will assume the role, following Gary Prophet, who plans to retire later in 2021.

Kindle started her career with Bank of Eastern Oregon in 1998. She has worked in virtually all areas of operations, most recently serving as senior vice president and chief banking officer. She is a graduate of Pacific Coast Banking School and past recipient of Oregon Banker's Association's Presidential Award, given annually to the outstanding committee chair of the trade organization.

"Becky has been instrumental in the growth of our bank as we have expanded across Eastern Oregon, Eastern Washington and Western

Idaho," said Jeff Bailey, president and chief executive officer. "Her knowledge, leadership, and the respect she has earned from her fellow employees as well as banking industry peers is quite impressive."

Becky resides in Heppner with her husband, Jim, and they have two adult children. She is active in numerous civic activities, currently serving as board chair for Morrow County School District.

"I am excited to continue my work with our fabulous team of bankers," Kindle said. "Our bankers truly appreciate living and working in our communities; serving the banking needs of our customers, and helping our communities thrive. Our bank's culture encourages growth from within the organization and I appreciate the opportunity and faith that the board places in me."

### School board supports superintendent amid COVID-19 challenges

HELIX — The Helix School Board conducted an evaluation of Helix School District Superintendent/Principal Darrick Cope and concluded that he has done an "excellent job" at accomplishing a variety of feats despite the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic, according to a press release from the board.

The school board noted that in the past year, Cope has helped the district navigate the "State requirements and District implications" brought on by COVID-19.

Among Cope's accomplishments were implementing K-5 math curriculum intended to increase assessment scores, a remote instruction option for high school students taking foreign language classes, and an evaluation and assessment procedure to check on ninth-graders' progress to promote increased graduation rates.

The board noted the pandemic and state shutdown forced the district to make many adjustments, but added that Cope "handled these demands directly and effectively."

Cope navigated and stayed up-to-date on the ever-changing state metrics that came at the whim of the pandemic, the board said, and helped manage the district's response.

Cope was also able to secure a certified teacher from the La Grande School District to provide virtual instruction to students, which the district intends to continue for the foreseeable future.

### Umatilla County reports 68th COVID-19 death

PENDLETON — Umatilla County Public Health announced three COVID-19-related deaths on Wednesday, Jan. 20, and one death on Tuesday, Jan. 19, bringing the county's total up to 71 deaths.

The county's 68th death of a person with COVID-19, announced Jan. 19, was a 56-year-old male who tested positive on Dec. 17, 2020, and died on Dec. 30, 2020, at St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton. This individual had underlying medical conditions, according to the press release.

The 69th death to be announced was an 82-year-old female who tested positive on Dec. 23, 2020, and died on Dec. 30 at Trios Medical Center in Kennewick, Washington. She had underlying medical conditions.

The 70th death of a person presumed to have COVID-19 was a 62-year-old male who died on Jan. 9 at his residence in Umatilla County. The death certificate listed COVID-19 as a contributing cause of death, according to the news release.

Umatilla County's 71st death presumed to have COVID-19 is a 72-year-old male who died on Jan. 8 at his residence in Umatilla County. The death certificate listed COVID-19 as a contributing cause of death.

The announcements come as the health department reported 53 new cases on Jan. 20 and 162 new cases on Jan. 19, bringing the county's total to 6,856 total cases reported in the county since the pandemic began. The Jan. 19 case count includes totals for the weekend and Monday, Jan. 18.

Morrow County reported three new cases on Jan. 20 and 23 new cases on Jan. 19, for a total of 945 since the pandemic began. The county has reported 10 deaths.

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