

EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50

PENDLETON

Til Taylor project gets bigger budget

Pendleton Development Commission agrees to more than \$130K bump

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Til Taylor 101 project is on time but over budget. Back in October, the Pendleton Development Commission allocated \$575,000 to Pendleton Parks and Recreation to renovate Til Taylor Park to coincide with the 101st anniversary of its namesake's death, a project that included replacing the park's wading pool with a splash pad, installing two new playgrounds and adding a dog park.

After some costs came in higher than expected and some unforeseen circumstances, the commission voted on Tuesday, May 18, to increase the budget by \$131,698, with most of the funding coming from public sources.

The day after the meeting, Parks and Recreation Director Liam Hughes toured the park, its north side fenced in as contractors and park staff worked on the project. With the wading pool already removed and covered over, Hughes said the new playgrounds are due to be installed next week.

Hughes said the cost overruns weren't simply an issue of miscalculated costs. While removing some of the old trees from the park was more expensive than what was budgeted because of some organic matter in the ground, Hughes said one of the additional costs represented an upgrade to the project.

Parks staff had initially intended to use rubber tiles as flooring for the playgrounds. But after a glue shortage led the tile supplier to cancel its order, the city was forced to switch to "pour-in-place" rubber, a higher quality flooring that also was more expensive.

"We initially negotiated a Chevy, but we actually got a King Ranch, fully loaded," he said.

Hughes was prepared to stay under budget by cutting the dog park and downgrading the fencing, but the commission, which is composed of members of the Pendleton City Council, asked him to come back with the cost of keeping the original vision intact.

Parks and recreation's new proposal, which the commission unanimously approved, requested an additional \$60,000 from the commission and \$46,698 from the city's parks trust fund, a fund derived from gifts

See Budget, Page A1

ELECTION COVERAGE



VOTER TURNOUT As of 9 a.m. 05/19/2021

Umatilla County	Morrow County
18.95%	30.53%

Initial results for special district elections in Eastern Oregon • Region, A7

Fresh faces fill open school board seats

BMCC race produces unexpected results as turnout dips

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — With all three incumbents up for election choosing to retire, the Pendleton School Board was guaranteed three new faces.

Beth Harrison, a stay-at-home mother and a community volunteer, garnered more than three-quarters of the vote in the race for Position 1,



Eagleheart



Gregg



Harrison



Puzey

securing her victory over retiree Rodney Thompson.

Harrison did not return a request for comment as of press time.

The race for Position 4 was technically a three-way contest, but teacher Chris Garrigues ended his campaign while remaining

on the ballot.

Preston Eagleheart, the managing director of Cayuse Government Services, still managed to garner a little more than 50% of the vote over Garrigues and Joey GrosJacques, the project director of TRIO and student support services

at Blue Mountain Community College.

Eagleheart thanked voters, the outgoing board members and the other candidates in the field, saying the board would've been in good hands regardless of who residents voted for.

"It's a great opportunity for me to learn and grow as I continue my journey," he said.

With Eagleheart set to replace Gary George on the board, Eagleheart's victory ensures an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes

See Election, Page A8

Mask confusion

Businesses allowing patrons to be maskless indoors must verify their vaccination status

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — There's a small orange note that Michael Gormley, the owner of Neighborhood Books & Gifts in downtown Hermiston, plans to show his customers in the coming days.

It says: "Unfortunately, we either have to require masks or check vaccine cards (which we don't know how to do)."

He's not the only one. Several Umatilla County business owners and employees have voiced frustration about the recent mask-wearing guidance put forth by the state this past week.

The new requirements, announced on Tuesday, May 18, say businesses allowing customers to be maskless indoors must verify if the customer is vaccinated against COVID-19. Businesses that don't check must require masks, the state says.

Employers say the change puts businesses in a difficult position bound for conflict and confusion.

"I'm not going to ask, they're just going to have to wear a mask," Gormley said of checking vaccine status. He added that he's lost customers by asking them to put their masks on or leave. "Unless they walk in here and show me their card, I'm not asking."

New rules

The new rule comes less than a week after state and federal officials announced that people who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 are no longer required to wear masks or physically distance in most public settings.

But that change came with some caveats. The decision, first announced by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Preven-



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Michael Gormley sits behind a plexiglass shield plastered with various mask and social distancing guidelines at Neighborhood Books & Gifts, the Hermiston bookstore he co-owns with his wife Judy Gormley, on Wednesday, May 19, 2021.

tion and later approved by the state, does not mean masks aren't required anywhere. For instance, the federal government still advises fully vaccinated people cover their faces while visiting health care facilities, flying or taking public transit, and in other settings, including homeless shelters, prisons or jails.

The Oregon Health Authority says fully vaccinated people can go maskless in "most outdoor settings" and an "uncrowded private or public space." However, as reported by *The Oregonian/OregonLive*, the "exceptions to the mask, face covering, or face shield requirement are not applicable to workplaces," the state says. Private businesses can even make their mask rules stricter than CDC guidelines, according to the state.

"Some businesses may prefer to simply continue operating under the current guidance for now, rather than worrying about

verifying vaccination status," Gov. Kate Brown said on May 13, "and that's fine."

Businesses left scrambling

But the recent changes have left businesses across Umatilla County scrambling to clarify the guidelines and figure out what they'll do. Several business owners and managers declined to be interviewed because they were unsure how to comply with the guidelines. At least one was concerned they would be penalized by the state for failing to adhere to the rules properly.

Umatilla County Public Health Director Joe Fiumara said the health department has been receiving calls all week from county businesses asking what they can and cannot do. He hasn't had a complete answer for them.

See Masks, Page A8

Looking to make a difference

Local student groups award \$30,000 in CommuniCare grants

By BEN LONERGAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Gathered around a table recently, students from Pendleton High School's CommuniCare Club reflected on a year of hard work.

The students looked back on the hours of dedication drafting and finalizing of their mission statement, interviews with nearly half a dozen different charitable organizations and the decision-making process behind allocating \$15,000 in grants as a part of the CommuniCare program.

The April meeting served as an opportunity to film interviews for the CommuniCare Virtual Grant Award Ceremony to be aired on KGW on Thursday, June 17, at 8:30 p.m. and was only the second time since the start of the school year the group had met in person.

"It's definitely been a lot more difficult than years past," said PHS senior Katie Kelm.

While the club usually operates before or after school, the changes to distance learning and unusual schedules made it difficult to find times to meet, Kelm said.

"Finding time that works with everyone's schedule has been pretty challenging but we've been able to do it successfully," she said.

See Difference, Page A8



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Jordan Schnitzer, left, addresses several members of the Pendleton High School CommuniCare Club during a lunch at the Pendleton Center for the Arts in Pendleton on Saturday, April 24, 2021. The lunch and a subsequent walking tour of the town were part of an effort to film the students for a virtual awards ceremony set to air on KGW in June.

