

College grads celebrate with drive-thru commencement

More than 130 graduate June 10 from Blue Mountain Community College

By **BEN LONERGAN**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Josefa Taula, 40, was smiling ear to ear as he rode atop his family's decorated SUV Thursday, June 10, through the graduation parade at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton.

Taula, a first-generation college graduate, spent the last two years working toward his associate of arts degree and plans to attend Oregon State University in the fall to pursue a degree in wildlife studies.

"It took me a while to get here," he said after accepting his diploma. "It was a lot more complex than I thought it was going to be, between working, and family and school."

Taula said he works for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Fish and Wildlife Department and wanted to pursue a degree to help further his career there. Career goals, paired with support from his wife, who received a degree last year from the Blue Mountain, motivated Taula to pursue a college education.

"If I can do it, so can you," he said.



Josefa Taula leaps from the top of his SUV to pose for his official graduation portrait Thursday, June 10, 2021, during a drive-thru graduation ceremony at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton.

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

"I was one of the kids that got straight Fs in junior high school."

Taula said he found success at Blue Mountain.

"I got straight As one of my terms, which was something I'd never

accomplished before," he said.

Taula said he hopes his children will look toward their parents' accomplishments and want to pursue higher education as well, and he was glad to have several of them in the car

to celebrate his graduation.

Also looking to pursue further education was Keyla Roman, of Hermiston. Roman graduated with an associate of applied science degree in early childhood education and

several career pathway certificates in education.

"I'm happy I'm done," she said. "But I've got another two years ahead of me."

Roman plans to continue her studies at Southern Oregon University in the fall and hopes to be able to apply the knowledge she has gained in her work with the Boardman Head Start.

The Blue Mountain Community College Class of 2021 included 274 graduates from the age of 17 to 59. Of those graduates, 138 students graduated with honors or high honors, and 13 were veterans, according to the college.

Among those graduating with honors was Terri Johnson, who led off the parade of graduates cheering from the back of a white pickup decorated with balloons. Johnson, who completed her associate's of applied science degree in business administration, works for the college and said she was proud to have received her degree 35 years after graduating high school.

"It feels amazing," she said. "It took me a long time to get here."

Johnson, who is a service specialist at Blue Mountain, said the staff and students were incredibly supportive of her and helped keep her motivated.

"It was a lot of hard work and tears," she said, "but I persevered and made it."

Pendleton native donates ship model to library

SS Pendleton wrecked off coast of Massachusetts in the 1950s

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The SS Pendleton never traveled to its landlocked namesake, but the Pendleton Public Library might have the next best thing.

David Parrish, of Seattle, met with Mayor John Turner and City Manager Robb Corbett to present a scale model of the tanker, which famously wrecked off the coast of Massachusetts in the 1950s. Parrish donated the model to the library, which is placing the model in a display case near the library's elevator.

Parrish, 78, grew up in Pendleton before moving away to Seattle in 1966. A retired electrician and Boeing employee, Parrish has been an avid modeler for years. He said a modeling kit for the SS Pendleton had been sitting in his closet for some time, but the thought of donating the completed model to his hometown helped compel him to spend the hundred of hours he needed to make it.

"I had a lot of fun in this town growing up," he said.



Glenn Graham/City of Pendleton

Dave Parrish, center, Pendleton City Manager Robb Corbett, left, and Mayor John Turner pose for a photo with a model of the SS Pendleton that Parrish donated to the Pendleton Public Library. Parrish, who grew up in Pendleton but now lives in Seattle, spent hundreds of hours constructing the model.

Parrish also remarked on the SS Pendleton's history, which was dramatic enough to capture the attention of Hollywood.

Built in Portland in 1944, the SS Pendleton was a 504-foot-long oil tanker that was traveling up the East Coast from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, when it ran into a storm near Chatham, Massachusetts, in 1952. Beseated by strong winds, heavy snow and 60- to 70-foot-tall waves, the storm eventually

broke the SS Pendleton in two, endangering the boat's 41-person crew.

The U.S. Coast Guard deployed a lifeboat to save the crew from the shipwreck, and despite facing the same inclement conditions that led the SS Pendleton to its fate, the Coast Guard was successful in saving almost the entire crew.

The guardsmen who saved the crew were awarded Coast Guard's Gold

Lifesaving Medal and were the subject of a 2009 book, "The Finest Hours." In 2016, Disney produced a movie of the same name that dramatized the events.

Turner and Corbett thanked Parrish for his contribution to the library while listening to him share memories of his younger years in Pendleton.

The SS Pendleton may be gone, but a piece of its memory lives on in the city it was named after.

Hermiston council to consider fee increases and a zoning update

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Hermiston City Council has a busy agenda for its Monday, June 14, meeting as the end of the fiscal year draws near.

The council will hold a public hearing and vote on the 2021-22 budget. The budget is 19.5% larger than the previous year, largely due to revenue coming in from the CARES Act and for planned capital projects, including the new city hall, an airport apron repaving, and a \$2.5 million infrastructure project at the South Hermiston Industrial Park.

The agenda includes a significant raise in fees for the city's building department. According to a memo in the agenda packet by building inspector Chuck Woolsey, the city is using a free building permit program by the state of Oregon and it requires the city's building permit fees be in compliance with state laws.

"Currently, the City of Hermiston is not current with the established fees required by the State of Oregon," Woolsey wrote. "Indicated

fees will increase anywhere from 17-33% to align the City with the State of Oregon fee schedule and will also be comparable to other cities local fees."

The new fee schedule also includes increases for plumbing, mechanical, electrical and structural permits, "some of which have not been updated for over 20 years," according to Woolsey.

The council also will hold a public hearing and vote on updates to the code of ordinances regarding two-family homes. The city must update its code to comply with House Bill 2001, which in part requires cities over 10,000 residents to allow duplexes in all zones where single-family dwellings are allowed. Cities must also hold single-family and two-family dwellings to the same standards.

As a result the city is amending its code to allow duplexes in all residential zones. Duplexes will be allowed on the smaller lot sizes currently allowed for single-family homes, but new single-family homes will be required to provide two parking spaces.

Companies plan to build Family Dollar and Dollar General in Pilot Rock

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — The incoming Dollar General in Pilot Rock looks to have some competition.

Eyes North Corporation, a Chicago-based corporation, is seeking a variance to the city code so it can go forward with plans to construct a 10,500-square-foot Family Dollar and adjacent parking. The Pilot Rock City Council considers that request when it meets Tuesday, June 15, starting at 6 p.m. at city hall, 144 N. Alder Place.

The council at the meet-

ing also plans to approve the city's 2021-22 budget of more than \$3.8 million.

The council in May granted a similar variance for the proposal to build a new Dollar General. Pilot Rock Mayor Virginia Carnes said the city has talked about the need for economic development for years, and a pair of new stores in town is a boon.

"We're thrilled to pieces," Carnes said.

Eyes North is buying the recently partitioned lot next to Schoolhouse Village, 241 S.W. Fourth St., according to the staff report to the council, to build a new Family Dollar.

The retail chain store has 8,200 locations, according to vault.com.

The city code requires a retail store to have one parking space per 200 square feet of floor area, one space per two employees and one bicycle space per 600 square feet of floor area.

That would require a store of 10,500 square feet to have 54 parking spaces. But Eyes North proposes 33 spaces as sufficient to serve customers.

According to the staff report, the site plan includes as much parking as possible given the dimensions of the property, a lot of 200 feet by

240 feet, and the proposal meets all setback and lot coverage requirements.

The council in May granted a parking variance to the Zaremba Group of Lakewood, Ohio, which bought Pilot Rock Hardware & Building Supplies, 181 N.W. Birch St., to build a Dollar General. City code would have required 54 parking spaces for the 10,640-square-foot building, but the council approved a variance for 35 spaces due to the shape of the property.

Dollar General is looking to expand in Eastern Oregon. The company announced

last week its new store at 45 S. Columbia St., Milton-Free-water, is open.

To commemorate that opening, according to a press release from the company, Dollar General plans to donate 100 new books to a nearby elementary school. Through the partnership with the Kellogg Company, the donation will be part of a plan to donate more than 100,000 books across the country to celebrate new Dollar General store openings.

Once the city council

makes a determination on the Eyes North Corporation variance, it moves on to the city budget.

The 2021-22 budget goes into effect at the end of June and is almost \$2.8 million less than the expiring budget. That's in large measure due to the about a \$3.1 million decrease in federal, state and other grants. The general fund budget for the coming fiscal year is \$828,952, and Pilot Rock's equivalent number of full-time employees remains at 9.11.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hermiston couple on the hook for \$1,400 after illegally selling crab

HERMISTON — A Hermiston couple has been sentenced to pay \$1,200 in restitution after illegally selling recreationally caught crab on the commercial market in Hermiston, according to a press release from Oregon State Police.

Gerald and Shawna Wilson of Hermiston also will pay \$100 each to the Turn In Poachers Line fund, and they are prohibited from obtaining a fishing or shellfish license for three years.

OSP Fish and Wildlife troopers began an investigation after receiving a call on the TIP Line reporting crab advertised for

sale on Facebook. Investigators followed up on the lead and discovered the couple selling live or cooked crab through social media, the release said.

The couple listed the crab as free of charge, but with a suggested donation of \$11 per pound to skirt marine fisheries laws that prohibit people from selling their personal limits of crab and other marine life on the commercial market, according to law enforcement. At least 11 people purchased the crab through Facebook or other social media, according to Lincoln County District Attorney Kenneth Park, who prosecuted the case in May.

"This was a good resolution," Park said. "We charged for criminal negligence."

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