

M-F experiences an influx of new businesses

By **ABBY MALZEWSKI**
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — For the first time in many years, Milton-Freewater is seeing an influx of businesses applying for land approval in the town. The city of Milton-Freewater reported a total of 212 businesses in the town in 2020.

Columbia Street is home to many of Milton-Freewater's big businesses, including Dutch Bros Coffee, Safeway and Papa Murphy's. Recently joining this stretch is Dollar General, and plans for open-



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, File
The Gathering Place in Milton-Freewater, Feb. 10, 2021. Milton-Freewater is seeing an influx of businesses applying for land-approval in the town.

ing a new location of Taqueria Mi Pueblito and Taco Bell on this street also are underway.

Dollar General

Construction for a new Dollar General store at 45 S. Columbia St. began in January. The business employed as many as 10 new hires at its opening in mid-May. Dollar General sells food, health and beauty products, basic apparel and more.

Taqueria Mi Pueblito

The local chain Taqueria Mi Pueblito has applied for a business license to expand

to a new location at 105 N. Columbia St. The chain has two other locations, both in Walla Walla.

Taco Bell

Taco Bell is undergoing a conditional-use permit process for a brand new building at 124 S. Columbia St. This lot has sat vacant and has served as a parking lot for at least the past 30 years. At the June 7 Milton-Freewater Planning Commission, Taco Bell sought a conditional-use permit for a drive-thru that was approved during the hearing.

Looking ahead

If this trend continues, more businesses could be locating to Milton-Freewater in the near future. According to the Population Research Center at Portland State University, within the urban growth boundary, the forecasted population of Milton-Freewater is expected to grow to about 7,441 in 2025 to 7,633 in 2030 and eventually 8,032 in 2040. With a predicted influx in population, Milton-Freewater could be growing and experience an advent of new businesses.

BMCC finalizes budget cuts

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Blue Mountain Community College Board of Education finalized a series of budget cuts at a Wednesday, June 16, meeting, affirming an anticipated round of layoffs. But the college's faculty union continues pushing to restore some of the positions.

Board Chair Jane Hill called the meeting a "momentous occasion" because it was the first time the majority of the board was able to meet in person for more than a year following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of their first orders of business was passing a \$44.2 million budget that codified a nearly 3% cut to the general fund, including seven layoffs.

More than 50 people were watching the meeting online, some of them sporting pro-faculty messages as their profile picture, but no one in the audience spoke for or against the new budget.

But Pete Hernberg, a math

instructor and the president of the Blue Mountain Faculty Association, reminded the board that further action still was possible.

He recounted how when faculty organized a letter-writing campaign to save some of the affected jobs, the board directed them to expand their campaign to include the state government and Legislature to secure more funding for community colleges.

Hernberg told the board that staff followed through and the latest word from Salem was that lawmakers were preparing to raise the state's community college fund from \$640 million to \$702 million. Should legislators approve that budget and Blue Mountain gets millions of more dollars in state funding than it anticipated, Hernberg said he expected the board to restore the business instructor position and several other part-time faculty positions.

After the meeting, BMCC interim President Connie Green said she understood

the union's position, but she would want to see the college hit another threshold before committing to restoring the laid-off positions.

Stymied by years of enrollment decline exacerbated by the pandemic, the budget anticipates a 1% drop of enrollment even as Blue Mountain begins offering in-person classes again. Green said she would want to make sure the enrollment doesn't drop below the projection before making staffing decisions.

"All of us need to be recruiters," she said.

Blue Mountain did get \$2.8 million for resources and \$3.7 million via federal COVID-19 recovery stimulus, but Green said the college decided to house that money outside the general fund because college administrators didn't want to skew budget data for 2021-22. BMCC plans to use the stimulus to hire temporary workers to work on initiatives like its new unmanned aerial systems program and outreach to lapsed students.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Hole in Highway 207 causes traffic delays

HERMISTON — Traffic on Highway 207 northeast of Hermiston is undergoing some disruption due to a hole in the road.

According to Oregon Department of Transportation Region 5 spokesperson Tom Strandberg, a section of asphalt caved in where a culvert under the road rotted away.

The stretch of road shortly before Highway 207 joins Highway 730 was closed Sunday morning, June 20. As of June 21, commercial truck traffic has been directed to take an alternate route, while local traffic is being routed through a single lane of traffic using an automatic flagging system to signal which direction traffic is flowing.

Strandberg said he didn't know yet exactly when the road will reopen fully, but the lane closure was "hopefully just for this week."

Umatilla County sheriff's deputy kills chimpanzee to help save woman

PENDLETON — A Umatilla County sheriff's deputy on Sunday, June 20, killed an adult male chimpanzee at the site of the former nonprofit named after the primate.

Sheriff's deputies, along with Pendleton police and fire, responded at about 8 a.m. to 42251 Reith Road, the home of Tamara Brogoitti and her chimpanzee, Buck, which has resided there for approximately 17 years, according to a news release from the sheriff's office. Brogoitti called for help because Buck was out of his cage and had bit her adult daughter, who is 50, multiple times.

Brogoitti reported her daughter was



Buck Brogoitti Animal Rescue/Contributed Photo
This photo from 2015 shows Buck, the adult male chimpanzee Tamara Brogoitti cared for at her ranch near Pendleton. A Umatilla County sheriff's deputy on Sunday, June 20, 2021, shot and killed the primate after it attacked Brogoitti's adult daughter.

trapped in the basement bedroom and needed immediate medical assistance, according to the sheriff's office.

But to render aid to her, a sheriff's deputy put down the chimp at Brogoitti's request. "The chimp was dispatched by one shot to the head," the sheriff's office reported.

The daughter suffered several bites to her torso, arms and legs, the sheriff's office reported, and medics rendered aid and rushed her and her mother to St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton.

Brogoitti from 2010 to early 2019 operated the Buck Brogoitti Animal Rescue at her ranch. The nonprofit primarily housed and cared for horses the sheriff's office seized in abuse and neglect cases.

—EO Media Group

Chlorine shortage worries cities

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The city of Hermiston has reduced all watering of its parks by 10% in response to a chlorine shortage across four states.

Oregon Emergency Management released a statement addressing the shortage, noting an equipment failure at a plant in Longview, Washington, that supplies most of the Northwest's chlorine had an equipment failure that will "temporarily limit the availability of chlorine for cities on the West Coast."

Many cities use chlorine to disinfect their supply of tap water and treat wastewater.

The malfunctioning plant, Westlake Chemical, does not anticipate being back online until the end of June, OME stated, and so the department is reaching out to all

municipal water suppliers of Pendleton, said Pendleton uses sodium hypochlorite to assess the status of their chlorine supply and see where supplies need shared. According to Oregon Public Broadcasting, some cities, including Medford and Forest Grove, only have a two-week supply on hand.

On its Facebook page, the city of Hermiston said it planned to save about 150,000 gallons of water by watering its properties 10% less, and encouraged residents to take their own steps to reduce water use.

"We're asking residents to be similarly mindful of their own water use as we monitor the situation," the city wrote. "Every gallon saved helps us conserve our current chlorine supply."

The city did note it still is operating the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center.

Bob Patterson, public works director for the city

of Pendleton, said Pendleton uses sodium hypochlorite — essentially concentrated bleach — at its water treatment facility. That comes from a different supplier than Westlake Chemical, he said.

The Pendleton Family Aquatic Center has enough chlorine gas to get through the current season, he said.

According to Oregon Emergency Management, cities with a surplus of chlorine for their drinking water will provide mutual aid to cities with a shortage. The department stated that members of the public can continue safely drinking their city's water, but encouraged people to do their part to conserve water to help stretch the chlorine supply.

Residents across the western United States already were being encouraged to reduce water consumption to address the severe drought.

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