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Dollar stores come to area in droves

Pilot Rock sees uptick in businesses as two dollar stores move to open

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — Pilot Rock, which lost 11% of its population in the last census, also is the hottest market for dollar stores in Umatilla County

On Tuesday, Oct. 26, local officials and other people associated with the project gripped their shovels and grinned for the camera during a groundbreaking ceremony near 241 S.W. Fourth St. Eyes North Corp. of Chicago will build the store and then lease it to the Family Dollar chain of dollar stores.

At a reception at the old Pilot Rock schoolhouse next door, Eyes North President Randy Coakley said national dollar store chains realized Oregon was an untapped market and began expanding accordingly. Coakley said his company is working on dollar stores in Oregon locations as far flung as Lakeview and Port Orford.

Dollar store chains seemed to have taken a special interest in Umatilla and Morrow counties. When the Family Dollar in Pilot Rock is completed next year, it will complement its other location in Boardman. Family Dollar's competitor, Dollar General, has been even more aggressive in the area. Dollar General intends to replace Pilot Rock's old hardware store with a dollar store on top of the stores its already built or in the process of developing in Hermiston, Umatilla, Milton-Freewater, Irrigon and Heppner.

With the exception of Hermiston, all of the new dollar stores are going in towns with less than 10,000 people. Despite only having 1,328 people, the smallest population in the bunch, Pilot Rock is getting both dollar store chains.

While dollar stores are relatively new to the region, their decision to heavily populate Eastern Oregon is well within their previous expansion patterns.

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PUMPKIN PICKING TRADITION



Rocky Heights Elementary School kindergartener Ruby, 5, carries a pumpkin Thursday, Oct. 28, 2021, during a class trip to Bellinger Farms' pumpkin patch in Hermiston.



Pumpkins sit in a bin at the Bellinger Farms pumpkin patch Thursday, Oct. 28, 2021, as students from Rocky Heights Elementary School line up for a hay ride.

Photos by Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Local youths enjoy a bit of normalcy with fun at Hermiston's Bellinger Farms

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Dressed as a pair of mermaid princesses, 5-year-old kindergarteners Mia and Mallory Martin were among 60 Rocky Heights Elementary School students who took a field trip Thursday, Oct. 28, for hayrides and pumpkin picking.

The Hermiston children and their classmates went to the pumpkin patch at Bellinger Farms off Highway 395 on the south end of Hermiston. Throughout October, children from local towns have been enjoying the same field trip.

For the Martin girls, twins, they were happy about having



Rocky Heights Elementary School kindergartener Ema, 5, struggles to pick up a pumpkin Thursday, Oct. 28, 2021, at the Bellinger Farms pumpkin patch in Hermiston.

an actual Halloween season with activities, family members said.

After she picked out her pumpkin, Mallory said she was happy and was looking forward to trick-or-treating later in the week. She was especially excited for Sour Patch Kids and

other candy. Her sister, Mia, said she was also excited about the season. She likes scary things, she said.

Witches, according to Mia, are the scariest.

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Moving on out

Milton-Freewater police to exit basement with new department

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

MILTON-FREEWATER — For nearly a century, the Milton-Freewater Police Department operated out of a basement. Now the department is getting its version of an extreme home makeover.

The city went out for a \$7.7 million bond for a new department, which passed in May with 403 people voting for and 241 voting against. If all goes well, city officials plan to go out for a construction bid this spring, with the hope construction will begin next summer.

For decades, the department's nearly 20 employees have moved through a crammed maze below city hall. The department is nearly windowless. Spiders crawl up the door frames. Chains and handcuffs sit atop tiny benches with chipped paint. A small sink, refrigerator, microwave and Keurig in a hallway comprise the "break area."



Boedigheimer

The department keeps evidence in two small places: filing cabinets and a safe that looks like it's from an old-school bank.

"I could break into one of those with a paperclip," Police Chief Doug Boedigheimer said.

Boxes and shelves overflowing with documents make the halls feel claustrophobic.

And there is little to no private space where police can interview victims of serious crimes. Police sometimes interview people on the three small chairs sitting in the lobby beside a drug drop-off box, Boedigheimer said.

"There have been times where someone has come in and wanted to talk to an officer, they're out there waiting for the officer, and they just leave because they see where they're going to be talking," said Boedigheimer, who added: "On those really sensitive crimes like sexual assault, it's a huge issue."

The air in the department is stuffy. The department becomes uncomfortably cold in the winter and hot in the summer, city officials said. During one winter storm, water drained into the basement, turning the department's carpet floor into one big sponge.

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Pendleton explains why some streets remain under construction

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Well into the fall season, some of Pendleton's worst streets went from bad to impassible.

It wasn't from a lack of trying from the city. — the city allocated \$2.2 million to street work this year plus another \$1.3 million from the urban renewal district for street repair projects. But many of the big repairs that were supposed to be done by now are still torn up mid-project, a trend the city attributes to multiple contractors, shallow natural gas lines and a misunderstanding over construction schedules.

On Thursday, Oct. 28, the city put out a press

release explaining why street construction was delayed before adding the city was considering assessing damages against one of the contractors.

"Currently, several roads have been under construction for a few months, causing frustration for residents and travelers," the press release states.

In an interview, Community Development Director Tim Simons said one of the most significant impediments to street construction this year was natural gas lines. Unlike crack sealing or an asphalt overlay, fixing a poor-quality road requires some excavation so that work crews can completely replace the street.

Prior to starting the street projects, Simons said city of

Pendleton officials met with representatives from Cascade Natural Gas to determine whether the gas lines needed to be repaired or would come into conflict with the various paving contracts around town. According to Simons, Cascade assured the city the lines didn't need to be replaced and should be buried 30 inches deep in accordance with the company's standards.

But when contractors started digging up Northwest 10th Street, they discovered the gas line was only about 10 inches deep and needed to be buried deeper. The 10th Street project halted as Cascade brought in their own contractors to work on the line.

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A road closed sign sits at the intersection of Southwest Seventh Street and Southwest Dorion Avenue in Pendleton on Friday, Oct. 29, 2021. The street is among several in the process of receiving updates.



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