Food:

Continued from Page A1

food trucks. Hunt, however, said there will be more. In a couple of weeks, food trucks will be "trickling in," he said. In the coming months, according to Hunt, the lot will fill with eight trucks.

Vendors already are lining up, he said. Mexican food, Asian food, hamburgers and more will all be available.

Clint Spencer, Hermiston planning director, is among the city employees who have been working on this project. Spencer said the city created eight individual water, sewage and electrical connections to handle trucks.

"It took longer to do the work than we thought it would, running through the contractor," Spencer said.

The contractor, according to Spencer, did not have time on his calendar to do the work and have it ready



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Customers wait for their food Friday, Jan. 21, 2022, at the Hermiston Food Pod.

any earlier than its January

Hunt said a shortage of food inspectors has delayed the other vendors. Additional food trucks would be operating now if they could have

received clearance, he said.

"The way this works is that (vendors) turn in their packet, they review it, it goes to the fire department, everybody reviews it to make sure we're safe," Hunt said.

Hunt applauded his neighboring food truck for completing all the necessary paperwork to open alongside his. Dolores Amaya, owner of El Salvadoreno No. 2, is a veteran of the food truck

business. She said she started her trucks in 2010. In addition to the truck she uses in Hermiston, she operates another in Boardman.

Amaya offers food from her native El Salvador. Pupusas, the national food of her country, is a popular item at her restaurant, she said. Also, she sells tacos, tortas, burritos and more. She said business is good in Boardman and she feels optimistic about her location in Hermiston.

"I'm so happy to be here," she said.

By April, barring inclement weather, Hunt said he expects to see the remaining vendors pass requirements and move into spots in the pod. Then, additional improvements will be made, he said. Among those improvements, according to Hunt, will be a new 5- to 6-foot fence around the property. He said he also wants to bring in live music and have local bands perform.

Hunt said he hopes to see

a public restroom added to the pod, though Spencer said restrooms are not planned. The portable toilet on the property should suffice, Spencer said, and there are restrooms across the street in the park.

Even without a regular bathroom, Spencer said the food pod is about serving the residents of Hermiston.

"There's so much interest in food trucks in town, and there aren't a lot of good places to put them," he said. The city saw this as a way to step up and help create, from a survey standpoint, something that is really important to citizens who have wanted a permanent spot for food trucks."

Hunt said the food pod will be a family location, where a person can "bring your kids and your grandparents, all at the same time." He expressed happiness about the pod and its future.

Hunt said "I want this to be Hermiston's go-to spot."



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Velda Arnaud, center, president of the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce board of directors, sits at a table Jan. 18, 2022, during the chamber's annual accountability forum. She has apologized for her recent chamber newsletter column on the use of gender-neutral pronouns.

Pronouns:

Continued from Page A1

pandemic. When she used her column to talk about pronouns, she said she was critiquing from a different perspective.

"This is going to sound wrong, but I thought it was just sort of the dumbing down of things, like we don't have to have tests to graduate from high school anymore," she said.

Arnaud said she didn't know why people used gender-neutral pronouns until after her column was published and people she knew began reaching out to clarify what her position was. When community members started calling and emailing the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce to criticize her column, Arnaud said she returned their emails and calls to apologize.

A business instructor at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton, Arnaud said she has spent her career as an educator teaching everyone regardless of whether they had a "good past, horrible past (or a) degrading past."

BMCC President Mark Browning weighed in on Arnaud's comments with a post on the college's Face-

book page. "BMCC would like to make it very clear that Dr. Arnaud's comments are hers alone and are not representative of the college and its values," according to the statement. "BMCC does not condone Dr. Arnaud's comments, but instead strives to provide a safe environment for its students, employees and community that is inclusive of everyone."

Arnaud said in hindsight,

CHAMBER PENDLETON VELDA ARNAUD'S COLUMN IN THE RECENT CHAMBER NEWSLETTER

Ostrich-like Behavior

A while back I was talking with someone on the phone, and I stated that I was going to start "ostrich-like" behavior. The other person thought that I said ostracizing-like behaviors, and he said that surprised him. Ostracism is a social behavior meant to exclude, reject, or belittle someone else. It might include verbal assaults or threats, and it is very harmful to the person at the receiving end. The fairly new term micro-aggression is one form of ostracism. Hopefully as you are reading this you are also saying that doesn't sound much like me. No, I'm going to behave more like an ostrich: I will be sticking my head in the sand until some sense of sanity returns to the world. For example, I cannot use "they" to refer to a singular person. While I completely understand that some people are against he and she pronouns, I worked too hard to learn English grammar to just willy-nilly make changes. In junior high and high school, I was put into every overflow course that was taught by someone who did not know the subject matter; hence, I graduated high school with honors having never parsed a sentence, and I did not know a noun from a verb. In community college, I was repeatedly told that I could not write. It took learning a foreign language for me to figure out grammar.

Also, using "it" as a pronoun for a person is not something that I'm going to do. (Yes, I know all about Cousin Itt,, and he was a womanizer.) It simply feels wrong to call someone an "it" as though that person is some type of thing. All of these crazy pronouns are stressing me out, so I'll just not use pronouns.

Ostriches do not actually bury their heads in the sand, and when threatened they will fall down flat. I seem to be getting really good at falling, even when not threatened. Ostriches are skilled at using their strong legs to defend themselves by kicking their opponents. While I am not much of a runner, I do share another quality of ostriches—They are very vocal. Yes, ostrich-like behavior works for me.

There is much more chaos going on in the world, and I'm not going to address it here. As for me, I am going to keep my head down and hope for brighter days ahead. As I was talking with a colleague a few days ago, she said that I was out of touch with today's jargon because I referred to something as a sh## show. She said the correct phrase was dumpster fire!

So, amid whatever dumpster fires you are extinguishing (or fanning), I wish you a wonderful 2022. Please continue to take some time for yourself and enjoy your family and friends! Restoring sanity cannot come soon enough!!

Happy New Year!

— Velda Arnaud, Chamber President

Statue:

Continued from Page A1

nearby that would honor the legacy of the region's tribes.

Schomburg also expressed concern with what she saw as flaws in the research done by Miller and her students, which Schomburg argued helped to spur the debate over the statue. Miller failed to reach out to descendants of Avard T. Fairbanks, who originally sculpted the statue of Marcus Whitman, Schomburg said.

"She would have had primary resources on the research that Fairbanks referred to in creating the statue of Marcus Whitman," Schomburg said.

In a brief interview, Miller stated the public did not have access to every piece of research material her students used in their project, and also argued the research project was not about the artist, but the art.

Theresa Fairbanks-Harris, descendant of the sculptor who was an art history lecturer and senior conservator of paper for the Yale Center for British Art, argued against removing the statue. Instead, she advocated for including additional artwork that could honor the legacy of the region's Indigenous

peoples. "I'd prefer to see effort being put into getting into Indigenous peoples sculpture opposed to tearing down other sculpture. I mean, that's a much more joyful, inclusive thing," she said. "But this is more like a crusade."

Conflicts of interest?

During his statements Jan. 19 and in a preceding interview, Washington State



Greg Lehman, Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, File

Emily Tillotson, left, Hannah Bartman, Marc Adams, Cia Cortinas, Briana Spencer and Victoria Lidzbarski stand Aug. 19, 2021, near the statue of Christopher Columbus on the Walla Walla County Courthouse lawn.

University professor Eric Johnson called into question the propriety of the arts commission meeting, saying a number of members had a conflict of interest and should be recused from any final recommendation.

He argued that Hannah Bartman, a member of the arts commission, should recuse herself due to her membership in the advocacy group We Belong Walla Walla, which has previously called for removal of the statue of Christopher Columbus at the county courthouse.

He also questioned another members of the commission who work at Whitman College could be expected to deliver an unbiased recommendation due to the political

climate at the school. The school has made several steps over the years to remove iconography and names that some may find offensive, he said, such as changing the name of the college newspaper from The Pioneer to the Whitman Wire, or changing the name of the school's mascot from the Missionaries to the Blues.

"To oppose the removal of the statue would risk academic promotions and scorn from fellow faculty and students," Johnson said. 'It is impossible for Whitman College-employed members of the arts commission to be impartial, regarding the Marcus Whitman statue, as their livelihood may be dependent upon the outcome of that recommendation."

However, none of those factors legally constitute conflict of interest or violate state and city laws regarding the appearance of fairness Chamberlain told the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin.

She reiterated the arts commission does not make a final decision on the fate of the statue, a power that rests solely with the Walla Walla City Council.

The arts commission will meet again in March to consider its recommendation to the city council, though the exact time and date will likely not be set until the commission meets again Feb. 2.

COVID-19:

Continued from Page A1

spread of the virus.

"If these events expect not to spread omicron, you're probably not being realistic," he said.

Umatilla County Public Health on Jan. 26 reported 198 new cases as well as two more deaths, bringing the county's total number of cases since the start of the pandemic to 19,460, and the total number of deaths to 192.

The 191st victim of the disease in the county is a 69-year-old woman who tested positive on Dec. 6 and died Dec. 13 at Oregon Health & Science University, Portland. The 192nd victim is a 66-year-old man who tested positive on Nov. 3 and died Dec. 13 at Good Shepherd

Medical Center, Hermiston.

If asked for his thoughts, Fiumara said he would advise event planners to hold off on their events for a month until new cases slow. Fiumara said he has seen modeling from the Oregon Health Authority that suggests the state may be hitting its peak and could see new cases start to drop in the

coming weeks. Studies have shown omicron to be a less deadly variant than previous types of COVID-19, and so far, the county has yet to report a corresponding spike in deaths. And the Eastern Oregon region also has managed to keep a healthy supply of hospital beds open.

But Fiuamra said he also understands many people in the county aren't interested in any more postponements. There are no longer any state prohibitions on large events aside from the mask mandate, and in some people's view, residents already had the chance to get vaccinated and now people should be free to make their own decisions.

"People are kind of over it," he said.

For anyone who does attend the First Citizens Banquet, or any other large indoor event, Fiumara recommended wearing a mask as much as possible. If a potential attendee is feeling any type of symptoms, even if they're mild, Fiumara said they should stay home.

The First Citizens Banquet will mark the 65th anniversary for the event. Past banquets have been held at the Wildhorse Resort & Casino.

Pendleton Chamber of Commerce CEO Cheri Rosenberg did not return a request for comment.





