

LOCAL BRIEFING

Fire burns shop in Hermiston

HERMISTON — A fire early Friday, Jan. 28, 2022, burned a metal shop and lean-to in Hermiston.

Umatilla County Fire District No. 1 responded to the fire on Hornsby Lane at 4:37 a.m., according to the district's post on its Facebook page. Engine 22 arrived first, and found fire burning a 30-foot by 30-foot metal shop and flames totally engulfing a 12-foot by 30-foot lean-to.

Crews knocked down the fire in the lean-to and made entry into the shop to extinguish the fire there.

The Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District and Echo Fire Department provided an engine and a water tender. There were no injuries, Fire District 1 reported, and the cause of the fire is under investigation.

Umatilla County considers \$24K in wolf compensation

UMATILLA COUNTY — The Umatilla County Board Of Commissioners this week considers approving more than \$24,000 in grants for wolf depredation.

The county's Wolf Depredation Advisory Committee has made the recommendation to grant the awards, which come from the distribution of the state's wolf predation loss compensation program.

The largest grant is for \$11,140.13 and would go to the Cunningham Sheep Co., Pendleton, to cover the costs of a range rider and dog maintenance.

The other grants are:
• \$8,820 to Thomas Ranch of Milton-Freewater for a range rider.

• \$2,193.83 to Krebs Livestock of Ione for a herder, dog maintenance and night pen equipment.

• \$1,870 to Eric Smith of Imnaha for a range rider and veterinary expense.

The total comes to \$24,023.96

The county board meeting Wednesday, Feb. 2, at 9 a.m., in room 130 at the Umatilla

County Courthouse, 216 S.E. Fourth St. You can join the meeting via Google Meets at bit.ly/3r9AMmG or by phone at Join by phone at 574-316-0147, PIN: 815 819 420#.

County commissioners also will consider approving the purchase of weed control products. The county sought bids for the products, and Wilbur-Ellis came in with the lowest amount, \$5,937.38.

To see the county board's full meeting agenda, visit www.co.umatilla.or.us and under "Departments," follow the link to the board of commissioners' agenda.

COVID-19 claims more local lives

UMATILLA COUNTY — Umatilla County since Wednesday, Jan. 26, added four more fatalities to its COVID-19 death count, bringing the total to 194.

Umatilla County Public Health on Jan. 31 reported the latest death is a 56-year-old man who tested positive on Jan. 13 and died Jan. 27 at Riverbend Medical Center, Eugene.

Last week, the county health department reported three deaths: a 69-year-old woman who tested positive on Dec. 6 and died Dec. 13 at Oregon Health & Science University, Portland; a 66-year-old man who tested positive on Nov. 3 and died Dec. 13 at Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston; and a 92-year-old man who tested positive on Jan. 21 and died the same day at Providence St. Mary Medical Center, Walla Walla.

The county on Jan. 31 also reported 267 new cases, increasing the total number of cases for the county to 20,054 since the start of the pandemic.

Morrow County added 30 cases to its total Jan. 31, according to the Oregon Health Authority, bringing its total to 2,826, including 26 deaths.

Statewide, the total number of cases as of Jan. 28 was 650,652 according to the Oregon Health Authority, and the total number of lives lost to the disease in Oregon was 6,086.

—EO Media Group

Downtown Pendleton road project begins soon

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The city of Pendleton reported upgrades to an intersection in downtown Pendleton are beginning the week of Feb. 7.

The Oregon Department of Transportation announced last week the project involves improving traffic signals and curb ramps to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act at the intersection of Highway 30/Southeast Court Avenue and Southeast First Street.

ODOT also reported the work would begin the week of Jan. 31. But the city on its Facebook page announced the project now starts the week of Feb. 7 and continues through April. Crews are scheduled to work Monday through Friday, from approx-



Phil Wright/East Oregonian

The city of Pendleton reports work begins the week of Feb. 7, 2022, to improve signals and curbs on Southeast First Street and Court Avenue in downtown.

imately 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Later this week the contractor will move in construction equipment and set up traffic control. Starting next week, traffic on Southeast Court will be reduced to

one lane. Crews also will start the removal of existing signals and sidewalks.

The project will result in intermittent single lane closures of Southeast Court and First and delays up to

20 minutes, and closures of Southeast First. ODOT encouraged drivers to use alternate routes rather than go through the work zone.

There also will be sidewalk closures and detours leading up to the intersection. Access for pedestrians, including those with disabilities, will be available through or around the work zone. Bicyclists will be able to follow vehicle or pedestrian routes.

Businesses will remain open during construction.

The transportation department also reported it will share more detailed construction information as the project moves forward.

You can visit the project webpage at bit.ly/3u9H87u and visit TripCheck.com for up-to-date traffic impacts during construction.

Two join growing field of commissioner candidates

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — Two conservative activists have further expanded the field for the two seats on the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners up for election in May.

HollyJo Beers is making another run at county office by challenging incumbent Position 2 Commissioner John Shafer, who is running for a second term.

Beers lists "not employed"

under her occupation, but has been associated with the Oregon Three Percenters, a right-wing group. She's also been involved in anti-COVID-19 lockdown and vaccine mandate protests among other demonstrations. A former Pilot Rock city councilor who also lived in Milton-Freewater, Beers now resides in Pendleton, according to her filing paperwork.

The other new candidate is Jesse Bonifer, an Athena business owner and city councilor running for the open Posi-

tion 1 seat on the Board of Commissioners. Like Beers, Bonifer has been involved in the Three Percenters and helped organize a campaign to pass the Second Amendment Sanctuary Ordinance in 2020.

Commissioner George Murdock holds the Position 1 seat. He is retiring from the board, leaving the seat open. Bonifer joins Susan Bower, the owner of Eastern Oregon Business Source in Pendleton, Cindy Timmons, the co-owner of Marv's Glass Shop in Milton-Freewater, and Alvin

Young, the manager of Elmer's Irrigation in Hermiston, as a part of the field vying for the seat.

If the Position 2 race stays at just two candidates, Shafer and Beers won't be on the ballot until the Nov. 8 general election. With the candidate pool for Position 1 now at four, all candidates will be listed on the ballot for the May 17 primary election. Regardless of the results, the top two-vote getters advance to a run-off during the general election.

Echo School District denies discrimination claims

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

ECHO — The Echo School district has denied it discriminated against the former coach of the Echo High School boys basketball team when he didn't get the job to coach the girls basketball team.

Aaron Noisey in early December filed a lawsuit in Umatilla County Circuit Court alleging the district

did not hire him as the girl's coach because of his gender. He is seeking \$203,391 — \$2,391 in economic damages and noneconomic damages of at least \$200,000.

The district denied Noisey's allegations in a response Jan. 11.

"Except as specifically admitted herein, defendant denies each and every other allegation, matter and thing set forth in plaintiff's

complaint, and the whole thereof," according to the court filing.

The district admitted it interviewed candidates in 2020 for the position of head coach of the girls' basketball team and Noisey did not get the job.

Noisey in his lawsuit claimed the district wanted a female coach for the girl's team. The district in its response reported it received

a complaint from Noisey regarding the hiring process, conducted an investigation and found no gender discrimination in that process.

Following the 2020-21 school year, Noisey resigned and took a job as the head coach of the boys basketball team for the Nixyaawii Community High School.

State court records show the case next has a conference call Feb. 10 for the attorneys.

Michael's
Fine Jewelry, Inc.

We're closing our doors FOREVER!
After serving Pendleton for 20 years, it is time to retire.

All jewelry, watches, clocks and giftware drastically reduced for **IMMEDIATE SALE**

EVERYTHING MUST GO! including cases, furniture, displays, even some tools and equipment

ALL SALES ARE FINAL!

Take advantage of these great deals just in time to buy for **Valentine's Day!**

HEARING AIDS ARE RECHARGEABLE, HANDS FREE, AND BLUETOOTH COMPATIBLE.

Verna's
HEARING CARE CENTER
WHERE YOUR HEARING IS MY CONCERN

Locally Owned and Operated with "EARS" of experience to help with your hearing healthcare needs.

MOST INSURANCES ACCEPTED!
Call to schedule a complimentary hearing evaluation.

541-371-1900
600 NW 11th St. Suite E-21,
Good Shepherd Health Care System,
Hermiston, OR 97838