

# Pendleton set to hire first communications position

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The city of Pendleton wants to hire someone to help it speak to the public.

The city posted a job ad for a “communications specialist,” a part-time position that will be responsible for facilitating the city’s internal and external communication. The 20-hour-per-week position is offering between \$29,120 and \$32,240 in pay per year plus limited benefits.

City council and staff have banded the idea of hiring a

permanent spokesperson or public information officer for years, but City Manager Robb Corbett said it gained more traction once the city council adopted improving communication as an official goal.

Rather than assign communication duties to an existing employee, Corbett said he decided to leave an unrelated position unfilled and create the specialist position in its stead.

“It’s just become more and more difficult for us to do everything that needs to be done or to carry it to the next

level,” he said. “We didn’t feel like the staff could do that in addition to their jobs.”

The staffer will report straight to Corbett and have to fill a wide range of communication roles.

Pendleton has seen an uptick in infrastructure projects such as road repairs and utility replacements in recent years. Corbett said one of the specialist’s tasks will be to regularly update residents on construction projects around town and explain

how they may impact their neighborhoods or commutes.

“We’ve not done a very good job of keeping people informed about what’s happening,” he said. “I’m not talking broadly. I’m talking about when (the) street’s ripped up. I think people want to know what’s going on.”



Corbett

The specialist also would help manage the city’s social media accounts, but not just to post updates or press releases. Corbett said the employee will need to

post corrections or responses when the city believes misinformation about an issue is spreading.

Many of the communication employee’s responsibilities are reflective of the council’s previous complaints about the city’s communication process, council members often asking staff members how the city is addressing complaints they feel are unfair or inaccurate.

Another running issue the council frequently brings up is what the city is doing to promote its successes.

Corbett said the specialist would be tasked with posting highlights and accomplishments.

“We’ve accomplished quite a bit and there are a lot of things that are happening that we’re not talking about that we need to be talking about,” he said. “We’re hoping that this person will help us to be able to identify those things that we need to celebrate as a community and to share that with the public.”

The city expects to fill the position in the near future. The application period for the position closes Feb. 28.

# Pendleton motel project could get \$600K

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Acting as the Pendleton Development Commission, the Pendleton City Council will consider approving a \$600,000 financial aid package to help a Portland business group renovate and reopen the vacant motel at 310 S.E. Dorion Ave.

The commission meets Tuesday, Feb. 15, to discuss the prospects of the MotoLodge, the former Knights Inn motel that Cascadia Hospitality recently purchased. One part of the package is a \$500,000 grant from the commission’s Rejuvenation program. The program is meant to address project’s that are multi-faceted remodels, and the grant amount is equivalent to 40% of the project’s \$1.3 million price tag.

“This will be a tremendous boost to downtown Pendleton’s attractiveness to visitors,” Charles Denight, the commission’s associate director, wrote in a staff report. “Not only does it add 40 valuable lodging rooms to our current inventory, but the rooms will be new, beautifully designed and within walking distance of our dining and shopping



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Roofing materials line the rooftop of the former Knights Inn on Feb. 1, 2022, in Pendleton. The Pendleton Development Commission meets Tuesday, Feb. 15, to consider approving a \$600,000 financial aid package to help the Portland business that is renovating the hotel.

areas downtown.”

Denight also wrote that Cascadia intends to upgrade the landscaping and pool once they open their doors to guests this May.

The other part of the package is a \$100,000 Jump Start loan. The loan is set to be paid back in three years with a 3% interest rate.

The commission is also slated to hear several reports, including a report on downtown storefront occupancy. After the commission meeting ends, the council will convene to discuss renewing the city’s auditor contract, several issues related to housing on the South Hill and designs for a new bus barn.

The development commission meeting will be at 6 p.m. at the council chambers in Pendleton City Hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave. The commission meeting will be immediately followed by a city council meeting at 7 p.m. Both meetings are available to watch virtually via Zoom at bit.ly/3zZlBjB.

# Pendleton man in jail after firing gun in trailer

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Police on Monday, Feb. 14, arrested a man following negotiations after a 911 caller reported he broke into a trailer and shot a gun.

Marvin Richard Strong, 39, of Pendleton, now is in the Umatilla County Jail on on numerous charges.

Pendleton police at 10:21 a.m. responded to Go Fish RV, 1500 S.E. Byers Ave., after receiving a 911 call of a possibly suicidal male who broke into a trailer and shot a round from a handgun, according to a press release from Pendleton police.

Police at the scene learned Strong was inside a trailer and armed with the homeowner’s handgun. The homeowner also reported Strong fired one round from the handgun during an argument.

Officers established a perimeter, evacuated others nearby and attempted to establish contact with Strong, Pendleton police reported.

Additionally, the police department directed the school resource officer to contact Washington Elementary School, 1205 S.E. Byers Ave., to place the school in lockout

status during the remainder of the incident. The officer also stayed on site at the school to ensure everyone’s safety.

The Pendleton Police Department also brought in its crisis negotiator to establish contact with Strong.

He exited the trailer at 12:05 p.m. and surrendered to officers. Police booked Strong into the Umatilla County Jail on the following charges: first-degree burglary, unlawful use of a weapon, felon in possession of a weapon, pointing a firearm at another, domestic violence menacing and second-degree disorderly conduct and on a probation violation.

Oregon State Police, Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office and Pendleton Fire and Ambulance Department assisted at the scene. There were no reports of injuries, according to the press release, and there is no ongoing threat to the public.

Records show Umatilla County Circuit Court in August 2021 sentenced Strong to two years probation for felony strangulation and on Jan. 25 issued a warrant for his arrest for violating the probation.

The case now goes to the district attorney’s office.

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