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**PENDLETON**

## Taxi debate resets after Uber talk

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — The Pendleton City Council at its Tuesday, April 5, meeting was supposed to consider an ordinance that would allow ride-hail services to operate within city limits. Instead, the council will go back to the drawing board.

In a report to the city council, city attorney Nancy Kerns wrote the situation changed after the city was able to get in contact with Uber, the ride-hail giant based out of San Francisco.

“Uber advises that it would like to be able to offer its technology and service to the residents and visitors of Pendleton,” she wrote. “However, the ordinance, as previously proposed, would not enable Uber to bring their service to this community. Uber is willing to participate in conversation aimed at finding a policy which meets the mutual goals of the parties involved.”

Kerns’ recommendation was to “direct staff with plans for future discussion.”

On April 1, Kerns declined to comment beyond what was in her report.

Before talking with Uber, city staff had negotiated with a group of Pendleton residents who wanted to drive for Uber but were prevented from getting started because of the city’s taxi ordinance. Represented by couple Alicia and Jesse Reynen, a group of aspiring Uber drivers asked the council to amend its taxi laws to give ride-hail services a chance to compete.

The request ran into swift opposition from Elite Taxi, the city’s only taxi business. The owners of Elite argued that competition from ride-hailing services such as Uber likely would put them out of business. That meant Pendleton would not only lose taxi services but also the contractor that provides the city with its transportation services for low-income, disabled and senior residents.

The council eventually directed city staff to broker a compromise between the ride-hail drivers and Elite that would form the basis of a new ordinance. City staff returned in March with the framework of a deal: Elite would operate mostly during the day and ride-hails during the evening hours, with some exceptions made for tourist events, including the Pendleton Round-Up. The set-up would be a part of a pilot program that would be revisited by the council at a later date.

Elite told the council it was satisfied with the agreement, but the ride-hail drivers weren’t sold. The Reynens said they wanted to be able to operate 24/7, but they

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## Wildhorse lands LPGA tournament



Photos by Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

**TOP:** Julie Steinmetz, of Moses Lake, Washington, tees off Thursday, March 31, 2022, at the Wildhorse Golf Course. Wildhorse hosts the Wildhorse Ladies Classic on Sept. 2-4, which will be the 17th stop on the Epson Tour’s 2022 schedule, welcoming professional female golfers from all over the United States and more than 30 countries. **ABOVE:** The Wildhorse Resort & Casino, which has 300 hotel rooms and is near the Wildhorse Golf Course, will not be able to accommodate all 2,000 professional golfers, volunteers and fans who come to town for the event.

By ANNIE FOWLER  
*East Oregonian*

**P**ENDLETON — Gary George never played a round of golf until he was in his 30s. Now the CEO at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, and a big golf fan, George is bringing an LPGA qualifying tournament to the Pendleton area.

The Wildhorse Ladies Classic, which is an Epson Tour event, will be Sept. 2-4 at Wildhorse Golf Course.

“We have been following the Symetra Tour (now the Epson Tour) for a while,” George said. “Last year, the Circling Raven Casino in Coeur d’Alene brought the event to their place. We went up and checked it out. The cost was something we could afford to do as one of the annual events that we do. I asked to meet with the tournament director.”

Most of the Epson Tour events are East of the Mississippi, but George pitched the idea of a second Northwest event to the Epson Tour directors.

“They thought it was a great idea,” George said. “We will be after the Circling Raven event this year. It’s a two-year event with an option for a third year. The players will be able to go from one event to the other without a lot of travel.”

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## Pendleton names Hermiston principal next superintendent

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — The Pendleton School District stayed local with its pick for superintendent.

At a special board meeting on Saturday, April 2, the board unanimously voted to enter into contract negotiations with Kevin Headings, the principal of Hermiston’s West Park Elementary School and the former superintendent of the Stanfield School District.

Headings had been vying with Kim Casey, a high school principal from Grandview, Washington, to replace Superintendent Chris Fritsch, who is retiring after five years in Pendleton.

Both introduced themselves and fielded questions at a commu-

nity forum Thursday, March 31, before meeting with the Pendleton School Board behind closed doors. The board deliberated its choice well into the night, but held off on

ings will start the job on July 1.

While candid board discussion on the two candidates remains private, Headings and Casey previously made a public case for their

**“I DON’T REALLY INTERVIEW WELL AT ALL. MY STRENGTH IS DOING THE WORK.”**

— Kevin Headings, new superintendent of the Pendleton School District

making an official decision until the minute-long special meeting on Saturday.

The board expects to come to an agreement with Headings later this month. Contract pending, Head-

ings will start the job on July 1.

Ready to take the helm

During his public interview, Headings assured community members this was not the best

format to speak to him in.

“I don’t really interview well at all,” he said. “My strength is doing the work.”

Following stints working in public and private schools in Kansas, Salem and Lebanon, Headings arrived in Eastern Oregon to work in the Stanfield School District, first as a K-6 principal and then superintendent. During that time, Headings said he worked to make the district more transparent and improve its perception in the community.

While he went from superintendent to principal when he took the job at West Park, he said he made the move so that he could learn to lead a larger district under the

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