

Walla Walla awards \$1.6M contract for First Avenue Plaza

By EMRY DINMAN
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA — A Walla Walla construction company has the job to build a permanent First Avenue Plaza gathering area in Walla Walla, to be called Walawala Plaza, which roughly translates to “many little waters.”

The Walla Walla City Council recently voted to approve a nearly \$1.6 million bid from Walla Walla-based Nelson Construction, which has done extensive work for the city in the past, including on the Rose Street Bridge near City Hall.

Though original estimates called for construction to begin in early 2022 and wrap up as early as mid-summer, work on the project is now slated to begin in October and finish by April 2023, said Deputy City Manager Elizabeth Chamberlain during the council meeting May 11.

Designs for the permanent pedestrian plaza were approved in December and include a curving pathway that winds between seating areas and mobile landscaping features. It is meant to provide an adaptable gathering space for residents and tourists in Walla Walla.

Two overhanging installations of metal bars are



PBS Engineering and Environmental recently showed these concepts of Walawala Plaza to the Walla Walla City Council.

intended to provide shade, while landscaping and designs inlaid into the

walkways will highlight the arrowleaf balsamroot, a plant of significance to

the area’s native peoples. Water features will signify Mill Creek and the “many

small waters’ in the valley,” according to a staff report.

The concept design also includes plans to change street paving where Main Street abuts the plaza in a way that calms traffic by encouraging vehicles to slow in that area.

The project will be paid for from four sources. Funding from the Biden administration’s American Rescue Plan Act COVID-19-relief fund will pay for the majority of the project, with \$1.25 million allocated toward the construction of Walawala Plaza.

City stormwater, wastewater and water funding sources will be tapped to cover the nearly \$350,000 remaining costs, as the city will be upgrading some water utilities during construction.

The \$1.596 million price tag was nearly \$300,000 higher than previously estimated, which will be backfilled with unused funds from other projects originally slated to be paid for with federal COVID-relief funds. In total, the city would need to pull in another \$400,000 for this project, said City Manager Nabil Shawa during Wednesday’s meeting.

To cover that additional cost, Shawa said he and city

staff recommend pulling those funds from the city’s low-income utility assistance program.

When the city of Walla Walla previously decided how to allocate nearly \$10 million in ARPA funding, the City Council approved a long list of uses for the funds. But since those initial allocations, some projects are no longer moving forward, while some funds have already been reallocated to backfill costs for the police and fire departments, Shawa said.

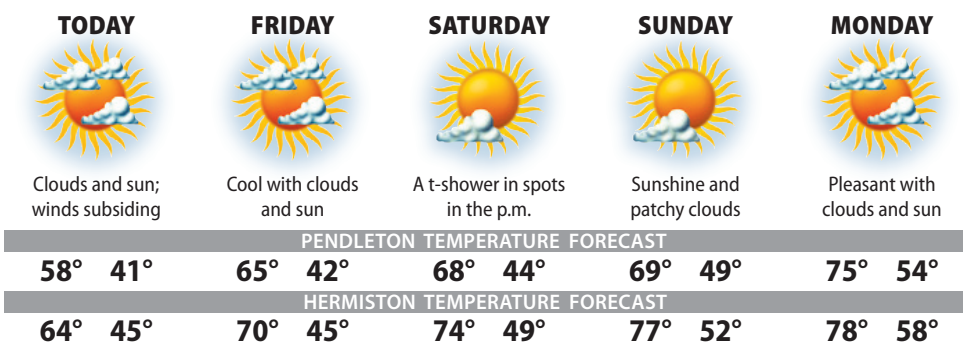
One project that no longer needs funding is the city’s low-income utility assistance program, he continued, noting that the city had allocated other funds to the Blue Mountain Action Council to serve that purpose and would continue to seek additional funding in the future.

However, more importantly, the city’s low-income utility assistance program isn’t seeing much use, Shawa told council members Wednesday.

“We see no need for that at this point in time and don’t foresee it either,” Shawa said.

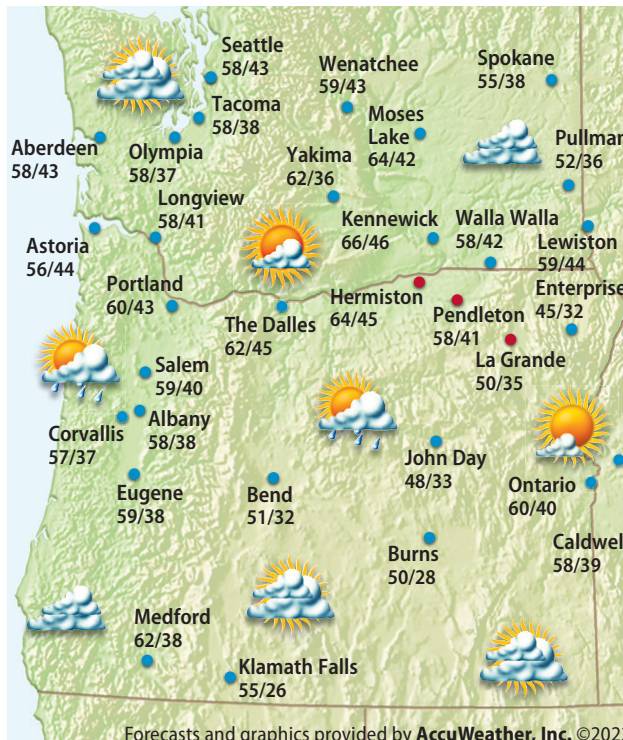
He added that additional funding was available in the future for such programs if a future emergency caused a surge in need.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	63°	49°
Normals	73°	47°
Records	94° (2006)	28° (1905)

PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	1.51"	
Normal month to date	0.80"	
Year to date	7.13"	
Last year to date	3.81"	
Normal year to date	6.14"	

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	66°	53°
Normals	77°	47°
Records	95° (2008)	33° (1966)

PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.86"	
Normal month to date	0.46"	
Year to date	4.75"	
Last year to date	1.99"	
Normal year to date	4.01"	

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Fri.
Boardman	WSW 8-16	W 4-8
Pendleton	W 12-25	NW 4-8

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	5:20 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:24 p.m.
Moonrise today	12:08 a.m.
Moonsset today	8:19 a.m.



Vet making fifth trip walking across America makes a stop in John Day

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Thirty-four-year-old Afghanistan veteran Jake Sansing has walked across America four times. Now taking his fifth trip across the country, Sansing said this will be his last.

“This time I will wind up collecting all the states except Hawaii,” Sansing told the Eagle on Thursday, May 12, during a stopover in John Day.

He got to town by walking along the shoulder of Highway 26, pushing a small cart with his personal belongings and a sign that reads “Jake walks America.”

The idea to walk across the country started in September 2013 following Sansing’s separation from the Army and subsequent homelessness.

“I started walking in between towns to look for work. I realized walking was helping my (post-traumatic stress disorder), so I decided to walk across America just to see what it would do for me.”

Sansing said he got addicted to walking during his first cross-country trek and started walking for various charities, with support-

ers donating a certain amount of money per mile. The first charity Sansing walked for was Shot at Life, a group that provides vaccines for children in developing countries.

After Shot at Life, Sansing walked for the Wounded Warrior Project and St.

“I’M READY TO SETTLE DOWN AND MOVE ON TO SOMETHING ELSE.”

— Jake Sansing, Afghanistan veteran

Jude’s Children’s Hospital. Sansing estimates he raised around \$20,000 for each of the charities he’s walked for over the years.

“That just kind of gave me a sense of purpose,” he said. “I woke up every day like it was my job. I wasn’t getting paid for it, but it was making a difference. I was just walking, that’s all I had to do.”

Sansing doesn’t have a full account of how many miles he’s walked in his five trips across America.

“I calculated 10,000 miles

the first three years I did it, which is why that’s in the title of my book,” he said.

These days Sansing promotes the book, titled “Walking America: A 10,000 Mile Guide to Self Healing,” during his travels across the country. When Sansing travels, he ships his books around 100 miles ahead of him, which he describes as a four- or five-day walk. He then picks up the shipment of books and either sells them in town or signs them and ships them to anybody who has placed an order on his website during his travels from one city to the next.

The final stop for Sansing is going to be back in Oregon. Wanting to settle “somewhere between Newport and Sweet Home,” Sansing said he plans on opening a campground for homeless veterans with the money from his book sales.

“Oregon has been my favorite state,” he said. “That’s why I want to settle here and why I want the campground here.”

Sansing said he doesn’t think he’ll get the itch to walk across America again after his fifth trip concludes.

“I’m ready to settle down and move on to something else,” he said.

IN BRIEF

Seattle man killed in freeway crash near Durkee

DURKEE — A Seattle man died in a single-vehicle crash on Interstate 84 near

Durkee on Sunday afternoon, May 15.

According to Oregon State Police, Jerry Linear, 63, was driving westbound in a Chevrolet Impala at about 4:18 p.m. when he failed to negotiate a curve and drove

off the freeway. The car rolled onto its top, and Linear died at the scene, according to OSP.

The shoulder of the freeway was closed for about three hours.

— EO Media Group

CORRECTIONS: The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
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Commercial Print Manager: Holly Rouska
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