

UMATILLA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Power outages at dispatch center prompt call for upgrades

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian



Umatilla County Sheriff's Office Communications Capt. Karen Primmer on Thursday, July 14, 2022, explains the new technological advances for the county's Emergency Operation Center in Pendleton.

Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County has a proposal to upgrade lighting in the sheriff's office's dispatch center after a pair of spring power outages. But when the county will make any improvements remains a question.

The dispatch area is part of the county's Criminal Justice Center, which includes the jail. Karen Primmer, sheriff's office communications captain, explained the justice center's uninterruptible power supply system and generator serve the whole facility.

"It's all one system," she said. "Until July last year, the UPS hadn't been replaced since the justice center was built."

That was in 1998. "We replaced the UPS batteries at least once," Primmer said. "We noticed fluctuations in symmetry. Even with the replaced batteries, the system had gone past the end of its life."

Replacing the UPS cost more than \$42,000, she added. "An outage in the jail

would also compromise staff and inmate safety," noted Sterrin Ward, public affairs captain for the sheriff's office.

Four personnel were in the dispatch center during the April 11 outage, which happened between 5:30 and

6 p.m. And five personnel were in the room May 29 when the power went out at 2:56 a.m., according to records.

"A switch to the backup generator went bad," Primmer explained. "Maintenance ordered a replacement,

but with supply chain problems, its delivery was delayed. The May outage occurred while the switch was still broken."

The dispatch center didn't lose 911 service or radio

during the outages, Primmer said. But darkness was a safety issue for staff. During the April outage, a single dispatch console remained operational, she said.

The dispatch center has six consoles, each with two radios, one dedicated and one backup, Primmer said. The dedicated radios are monitor-based, 700 Mhz units from the Umatilla-Morrow Radio & Data District. Neither the monitor nor backup radios went down during the outages.

Three to four dispatchers staff the 911 center on a normal shift.

"Dispatchers stayed there during the outages," Primmer reported. "We did not abandon the center. We answered 911 calls. We used cellphones for light, but now have flashlights."

Umatilla County and Morrow County dispatch centers are each other's backup.

The center in 2021 took 34,002 calls for 911 and 111,053 calls for service. From Jan 1 to July 13 this year, it took 16,192 calls for 911 and 59,212 service calls.

Mark Tanner, Umatilla

County maintenance director, recommended installing emergency lighting for the dispatch area at the justice center, at the board of commissioners meeting July 6. He presented a proposal of \$11,669 from Pendleton Electric Co. to upgrade lighting.

Tanner proposed installing six battery backup bug-eye egress exit lights and power extension from the lighting circuit prior to the 911 area switches. The proposal also included installing 22 Fulham Hotspot H-shaped, 6-watt magnetic backup lights, with driver and battery for existing parabolic and standard three-lamp troffer fixtures.

The board discussed whether to adopt Tanner's proposal or to fund a more comprehensive upgrade for the entire justice center facility.

County Commissioner and board Chair John Shafer said Tanner is going to check with the fire marshal to find out if the building is up to code.

"We don't know when the final for the dispatch will be on the agenda," Shafer said.

BLUE MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Faculty files grievances over layoffs

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Blue Mountain Community College Faculty Association is individually grieving the five full-time teachers the college laid off in the June 6 retrenchment, according to its president, Sascha McKeon, in an email. She said five part-time positions also were lost in the new budget.

"We filed the grievances because we believe the college violated the provision in our contract related to layoffs," she wrote. "The college president and the board chair signed the collective bargaining agreement. So they should see that our contract is followed just like any contract they have with any entity. It's a legally binding agreement."

The college administration has argued the actions are justified due to decreasing enrollment and to help close a \$2 million budget gap. But McKeon said that while the college laid off

faculty it also was posting new positions with a total expense of \$250,000. She said these were a director of Student Success

registrar. It's a reallocation of duties, split with some other offices. We're taking a better approach to serve our students, so we can go

the grievance process.

"BMCC has an attorney but I felt, and the board agreed, that we needed representation by a specialist in that field," Browning said. "In a legal matter, that's the best way to do business. We could save the taxpayers money if the faculty union pulled back its grievances."

Cost of living increases are back on the table, as a result of the grievances.

"During the 17-day negotiations 'cease fire' in May, the union offered to take out cost of living increases, but now they're demanding them again," Browning said. "I know there's inflation, but they're already getting an average step up of 4.5%."

No funding is specifically allocated within the 2022-23 fiscal year budget for cost of living increases for faculty or classified staff, Browning noted.

"Where will the money come from?" he asked. "Students' tuition? The taxpayers? They're suffering from high prices, too."

and Services and a director of Recruitment and Retention.

McKeon contended the board needs to address these issues if there is to be accountability.

BMCC President Mark Browning explained the board's actions since approving the layoffs in June.

"There are not two new positions. No new (full-time equivalents)," he said. "One replacement was our

out to recruit more. Why hire more faculty without more students?"

The annual salaries of the five laid off instructors ranged from \$80,341 to \$97,511, according to information from the college, and enrollment declined from 2,482 full-time equivalent students in 2011-12 to 1,153 in 2021-22.

The college has hired a labor law attorney to handle

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— Mark Browning, BMCC President



Browning



Corbett

PENDLETON

Development commission considers changing grant application review process

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Development Commission is considering changes to its grant application review process.

Three of the four citizen members of its Grant Review Advisory Committee resigned recently. A full committee would have seven members.

"Now grant applications go to the committee twice a year," City Manager Robb Corbett said. "It's done by the PDC's cycle. But now available funds are low, so there's a conversation among PDC members to decide what to do."

The city council established the nine-member PDC in 1981 to act as the Urban Renewal Agency. PDC members are the city council and mayor.

The grant review committee was formerly called the Facade Restoration Committee, with up to nine members. There also are a general PDC Advisory Committee and a Jump Start Committee.

Kate Dimon, grant review committee chair, with members Velda Arnaud and Bill Taylor resigned in protest, alleging the PDC did not follow its own rules and procedures. Member Tonya Nichols remained.

The committee reviews grants on the second Tuesday of each month. Applications are due the last Monday of the preceding month.

The standards for a Rejuvenation Grant to restore an entire building are the same as for the Upper Story and Facade Restoration programs. Historic building renovations or restorations must follow certain standards.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Boardman city councilors under investigation

BOARDMAN — Six of seven Boardman city council members are under investigation by the Oregon Government Ethics Commission for violations of executive session provisions of Public Meetings law. The commission voted to conduct the investigation pursuant to a complaint by Boardman businessman Jonathan Tallman on July 8.

"City hall is not following all procedures and protocols," Tallman charged. "Councilors need to be held accountable."

Ethics commission staff are investigating the matter and will prepare a report for consideration in a public meeting for Dec. 16, according to a letter Tallman provided from

Ronald Bersin, OGECE executive director.

Council members under investigation are Paul Beagle, Roy Drago, Paul Keefer, Katy Norton, Leslie

Pierson and Brenda Proffitt.

Karen Pettigrew, Boardman city manager, did not respond to a request for comments by publication time.

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