

Fire:

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extreme risk. About 80,000 property owners were found to be in high or extreme risk areas, and received letters from the Department of Forestry telling them that they could be subject to fire-resistant building codes currently under development.

Imagine living on Weston Mountain, Hansell said, and you have never heard of Senate Bill 762 but you then get a letter from the Oregon Forestry Department saying your land is in a high-risk fire zone and you could be subject to fire-resistant building codes that are in development. And if you disagree with that, you can appeal.

But appeal what? Hansell said. The farmer in this case does not even get to know what regulations to appeal.

Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer of Pendleton said that is a scenario he can relate to because he received the letter about a week ago.

"I was trying to figure it out," he said. "I was as much in the dark as anybody else who received it."

Shafer said his property is under the protection of a city fire department with a Level 3 Insurance Service Organization rating and the letter states he was in a high-risk area of wildfire.

"That didn't make sense to me," he said.

The map created backlash during its brief existence. Many people argued that it incorrectly listed homeowners in high risk areas when they may not have been in part because they were not given credit for taking steps to make their homes fire resistant. Others complained

that the map resulted in insurance companies raising premiums significantly and lowering property value.

Shafer said right off he wanted to know who in Salem from Eastern Oregon was working on addressing this, and found Hansell was on it as well as Rep. Mark Owens of Crane and Sen. Lynn Findley of Vale, all Republicans.

The refinements that will be made to the new fire risk map will incorporate feedback from more than 2,000 Oregonians received during the recent in-person and online meetings with people around the state, according to the Oregon Department of Forestry's website.

The department has not set a timetable for the revisions, according to the website, because it wants to allow for plenty of time to get input from the public.

Oregon State Forester Cal Mukumoto said in a statement his agency got specific feedback from 2,000 residents about problems with the risk designations that were assigned by the Oregon Explorer project and said climate scientists would refine the map and reissue a new version at a later date.

"While we met the bill's initial deadline for delivering on the map, there wasn't enough time to allow for the type of local outreach and engagement that people wanted, needed and deserved," Oregon State Forester Cal Mukumoto said in a statement. "We know how important it is to get this right."

"I actually applauded the efforts of the Oregon Department of Forestry to roll it back," Hansell said.

— The Observer reporter
Dick Mason contributed to this article.



Shafer

Projects:

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Valentine's Day red, pink and white, and St. Patrick's Day or Spring Equinox green, for example.

The Umatilla Falls project plan already is about 95% complete. Design work has been underway for three years, he said.

"The total project budget for Umatilla Falls, including engineering, design and construction is \$925,000," Stockdale reported. "That includes all work already completed and anticipated construction costs."

He can't release the engineer's estimated construction cost yet. This project will go out for bid in December, and the city can't share the amount because it could influence the bids.

"The engineering document is pretty dull, but the designs are appealing," Stockdale commented.

He said the city expects work to begin in February or March of next year and have the work completed by June 2023.

Wayfinding signage project

Themes in the new sign will serve as a template for wayfinding art throughout the city, Stockdale said.

"Merje's wayfinding plan will produce designs roughly the same for all but small sites with essentially customized signage," Stockdale said.

The city's partnership with Merje to create Umatilla's Wayfinding & Signage Program follows the design firm's recently completed projects with Hermiston, Medford and Eugene.

"We look forward to utilizing their expertise of Oregon and our region for this project," Stockdale said.

The city manager said there is a lot on this year's budget, and work will continue from now to January with the aim of seeking bids around Thanksgiving for actual purchase and installation of the final designs.

Merje's program includes vehicular directional signage, identification of parks and other public sites and pedes-

trian and bicycle navigation signs.

"This will create a modern and uniformed look throughout the city's parks and public buildings," Stockdale explained. "The program will help guide motorists and pedestrians along and through streets, sidewalks and public spaces throughout Umatilla. We anticipate that this design will be unique to Umatilla and reflect the brand, character, history and culture of our cherished community."

Stockdale said he hopes to kickoff the project toward the end of August, and to completed it by the beginning of 2023. He said he anticipates the first set of wayfinding signs to be installed next summer.

"The Merje contract is brand new, we haven't spent any funds on that yet," he said. "The agreement is for \$58,960."

Mural project

Finally, Umatilla also is working to implement its 6 feet by 26 feet mural project. This consists of six murals completed throughout the city by 2026.

"We have identified the all-new Nugent Park concession and broadcast building as our first mural to be completed," Stockdale said. "The building is scheduled for completion by January. The mural is to commence in February and to be finished in March, just in time for our Little League kickoff."

The Umatilla Museum has been identified as another mural location, while also freshening up the painting already on the east side of the building, he said. The city continues to talk to other business owners and public facility managers to determine the final four locations.

"All-in-all, (Umatilla) is making earnest and deliberate investments to continue to beautify our small town to make (the city) a wonderful place to live, work and play," Stockdale concluded. "Umatilla Falls, wayfinding signs, new park entrance signs and murals are wonderful new improvements we can all look forward to starting now and over the next several years."



Phil Wright/East Oregonian

From left, Brandy Coleman, Quincy Morrison and Julianne Jones came ready for the fun Saturday, Aug. 6, 2022, at the second annual Pendleton Public Library Comic Con.

Comics:

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Independent comic book creator Brandon Hayes came from The Dalles to talk up his book "Thready: A Bipolar Masterpiece."

Hayes described the work as a mental health and mental awareness comic. He explained the comic has a run of seven issues about a week in the life of its protagonist, Thready, a kind of hairy monster that wears a mask and is manic-depressive. Each issue focuses on one day in Thready's week. Some might see the portrayal of someone with bipolar disorder as disrespectful, Hayes said, but he's not too concerned about that criticism.

"I have bipolar disorder, so I talk about it however I want," he said.

Hayes brought copies of the first issue of "Thready" to sell. The others are in progress, he said, and he has storyboarded the entire tale. He said he writes the comic and collaborates with artists to draw the images for the comic. He said the idea is to have a different artist for each of the seven issues.

"Thready" has autobiographical elements, Hayes said, but while he puts some of his personal life into the character, the character is not him. The name of the character, though, comes from a specific time in his life.

He said he once worked in a movie theater, and one of



Phil Wright/East Oregonian

Nathan Smith, center, and Rorey Kuemper, right, talk about some of the offerings at their table Saturday, Aug. 6, 2022, at the Pendleton Public Library's second annual comic con.



Phil Wright/East Oregonian

Joshua Eaton, center, runs a roll playing game Saturday, Aug. 6, 2022, during the second Pendleton Public Library Comic Con in Pendleton.

the tasks he did was to thread the film into the projector.

"Go thread the projector," he said. "So Thready."

The character also wears a mask. Hayes said the concept for the character started before the pandemic, and while the mask plays into that, the layers of wearing a mask go beyond the circumstances

of the last couple of years.

Heather Culley is the library's technology assistant, and the library's comic con is her brain child.

She said last year's comic con was the library's first and also was its first big event after pandemic restrictions eased off as, as long as fewer than 300 attended. It

drew 40 people, she said.

Going into the second year, she added the free tables for vendors. She said she heard Smith's little shop was a gamer base, and she was thrilled he jumped in.

Library assistant James Simpson was the reason Hayes was there. She said the two are friends.

"We're just so lucky he could come," she said.

Culley explained she likes comic books a lot, but beyond entertainment or commentary, comic books are an important avenue for some people, especially for reluctant readers, to have a positive experience with reading.

Culley talked about continue to grow the event and make it big enough to find another home — maybe one day at the Pendleton Convention Center.

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