

High winds, rain, hail batter M-F area

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

MILTON-FREEWATER — The Walla Walla Valley suffered extensive damage from a thunderstorm on Wednesday night, Aug. 10.

“It was a tornado-like storm, with extremely high wind, rain and hail,” Milton-Freewater City Manager Linda Hall said. “Water, street, sewer and electric power crews from the city have been working since last night to restore services and clean things up. It was unusually damaging. Poles were sheared off and trees downed.”

Much of the city was without power during the night.

“Some customers north of the city but within the utility’s service area are still out,” Hall said. “BPA lost some transmission lines, but their efforts to restore power have borne fruit. The torrential downpour caused flash flood-like conditions in parts of the city.”

Hall reported that downed trees caused property damage outside the city.

“Some did hit structures and roofs and corners were lost,” she said. “A car was smashed.”

The storm launched Michelle Morgan’s 10x10-foot



Michelle Morgan/Contributed Photo

Milton-Freewater resident Michelle Morgan’s shed rests in a ditch Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, after a storm hit the town and wind blew the shed over a fence and into the ditch.

backyard shed over her cyclone fence into an irrigation ditch 40 feet away in her side yard. She lives at 1116 Vining St.

“It escaped the yard,” she said. “Crazy! The wind lifted the old metal shed over the cyclone fence. It landed about half into the ditch. It was a powerful squall.”

The gust came after the first, heavier hailstorm, Morgan said.

“It was about 8:15,” she said, “post the quarter-inch hail and after the lull before the lighter hail and rain.”

Her family just bought the house, and were planning to redesign the backyard.

“We had just hired a landscaper,” she said. “The shed isn’t needed. We might pull up the pad and plant tomatoes. Next year, the site could be a tomato haven.”

Hall hoped that the forecast for Thursday evening was not a repeat of Wednesday’s weather.

The National Weather Service’s 2:10 p.m. forecast called for a “marginal risk” of severe thunderstorms for the region, according to its Storm Prediction Center. NWS sensors at Pendleton recorded winds no higher than 35 miles per hour Wednesday. Isolated thunderstorms did strike the area, meteorologist Camden

Plunkett reported.

However, a team went to the Walla Walla Valley on Thursday afternoon to investigate the reports of storm damage. The investigators did find evidence of high winds in two areas, Senior Meteorologist Larry Nierenberg’s local storm report said.

“What we found out,” he said, “based upon structural damage to an auto shop (owner’s) mobile home near State Line Road around 7:15 p.m., was that wind speeds then reached 60 to 70 miles per hour. Tree limbs were down and corn was blown over.”

However, later in the storm, gusts apparently picked up to hurricane force.

“Around 9 o’clock, they were probably close to 90 mph,” Nierenberg said. “An empty mobile home near the drive-in theater was thrown about 30 feet. We did not find evidence of a tornado. These all appeared to have been straight winds, not twisting.”

Sometimes radar can’t pick up high winds, Nierenberg noted.

“The farther out you go, the higher will the radar beam track,” he said. “And winds can be wrapped in rain, which obscures them.”

Bentz discusses hot topics in town halls

Locals ask about FBI raid on Trump, social media, immigration

By ANTONIO ARREDONDO AND ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The FBI raid on the residence of former President Donald Trump, social media and immigration were some of the hot topics U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz addressed during town hall meetings Wednesday, Aug. 10, in Eastern Oregon.

Fifty or so locals attended the afternoon event at Blue Mountain Community College Science & Technology Center, Pendleton. While not every audience member got their number called to speak, many did get an opportunity to make their voices heard.

After briefly introducing himself, Bentz opened up the floor for questions. Jim Setzer of Adams had the first question of the day, asking Bentz about his voting history, including his stance on abortion and other health care options.

“I am a right-to-life candidate,” Bentz said in response. “If you would like a choice candidate, you should vote for someone else.”

Audience members asked two separate questions regarding the recent FBI raid of former President Donald Trump’s private residence at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida. Bentz said he wanted to get more information on the situation, but questioned why the FBI was in the vicinity.

“The FBI has overreached over and over again,” Bentz said. “One thing we’re waiting for is why did they do it?”

Bentz also discussed the dangers of social media throughout the meeting. He questioned the abilities for tech companies to distinguish between misinformation and “something you don’t like.”

Approximately 15 people addressed Bentz during the public forum though some did not have a question. Several participants thanked Bentz for his work in Washington or the veterans on his staff for their service.

The first-term representative briefly touched on other issues such as the 2020 presidential election and voting issues before concluding the town hall and thanking all participants for their participation and time.

Pendleton Mayor John Turner, Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer, and BMCC President Mark Browning were all in attendance. None of them asked questions.

It was the sixth stop for Bentz on his trip around Oregon’s 2nd Congressional District. The represen-

tative before the Pendleton event made stops in Grants Pass, Medford, Prineville, Madras and that morning in Boardman. He said he plans to make more stops throughout the district in the following weeks.

Boardman town hall

Bentz addressed immigration, child care and veterans’ benefits a few hours before at the SAGE Center at the Port of Morrow, Boardman. About a dozen residents attended the town hall.

He also gave some indication as to how things might change in Washington with the upcoming midterm election. If Republicans are in the majority next year, he said, they will be looking for ways to cut back on government spending.

Some in the meeting wanted to know about government assistance. Debbie Radie of Boardman Foods asked Bentz about issues related to employment.

Radie pointed out the nation has a low unemployment rate, but Boardman Foods is having trouble finding enough employees. She said businesses such as Boardman Foods could benefit if the federal government acted on child care, freeing parents to work. Also, she said, businesses need foreign immigrants for their labor, and government could help with that, too.

Cameron Krebs agreed, saying foreign workers are key to our community and essential to local business. He called for Bentz to support their efforts, possibly with a program to offer amnesty.

Bentz responded to both, saying the U.S. is facing an “organized wave” of immigration that will need to be addressed before it can expand a visa program.

He said he has visited the U.S.-Mexico border, and he has seen immigrants massing there. Many of the people, he said, are poor, uneducated and lacking proficiency in English. According to Bentz, many people are illegitimately claiming asylum. And Bentz expressed the hope the border could be fixed.

Radie also asked about nitrate contamination, a major issue of concern in the Boardman area. Bentz acknowledged there has been a long-standing practice of imprecise nitrate use, which has led to the contamination of many private wells. He said this problem needs addressing, both in short and long terms.

And veteran Chris Brown said he suffers from health problems and has had difficulty receiving care. According to Brown, the system of providing health care to veterans is “not user friendly.” Other vets agreed more needs to be done.

He said he would look into the issue and communicate further with people who were having troubles.

STANFIELD

Housing developments in Stanfield’s future

By ANTONIO ARREDONDO
East Oregonian

STANFIELD — Stanfield is growing.

After two other developments already started, the Stanfield City Council at its meeting Tuesday, Aug. 4, approved a third.

Stanfield City Manager Ben Burgener confirmed SGS Contracting Services Inc. is working on a new development on the north end of Stanfield at the intersection of Highway 395 and Canal Road.

The lot will be built across from the Silver Ridge development, another recent housing project Burgener said is nearing completion.

There have been two public hearings discussing the proposed project, with the most recent on Aug. 4. While Burgener said there were not a lot of public comments at the time, it meant the housing development moved on without a hitch. Two weeks from now, a private meeting will discuss the proposed housing further.

As it stands now, the



Mackenzie Whaley/East Oregonian

The site of a future housing development in Stanfield is a wheat field as of Aug. 4, 2022. While there is no timeline, the project at the intersection of Canal Road and Highway 395 in Stanfield calls for nearly 300 houses.

SGS development will be 107 houses, with plans for improvements to Canal Road as well as several new streets. Canal Road is unpaved and runs through a wheat and corn field.

“They’ve mentioned paving Canal Road all the way to Feedville (Road), which would be nice,” Burgener said.

An additional hearing is upcoming for a manufactured home complex in the same development. One hundred or so extra homes could be placed next to the area. Burgener said as of right now,

plans are for 107 single-family residences and 180 manufactured homes.

While there’s still no timeline on the Canal Road project, it’s one of three major projects that have begun over the last 18 months.

After a rezone in July 2021 paved the way for Silver Ridge, the new development on the north side of Stanfield has added more than 58 acres of housing to the area. So far, several homes are built with nearly 40 still to go, Burgener said.

The south side of Stanfield also is seeing new projects.

Bumble B Estates has broken ground and plans to add 99 single-family residences. The East Ball Avenue construction is visible when entering the city.

According to the city of Stanfield’s website, this trend started in 2020 with the addition of Patriot Heights, a 41-home development also off of 395 on the north side of town. The Turner Addition on Sloan Street is a smaller, eight-house project also underway.

In total, Burgener said the developments could add as many as 1,000 residents to Stanfield. For a town with a population at 2,144 in the 2020 census, this new wave of houses is a sign of a changing city.

“These developments are going to improve our infrastructure,” he said, “It’s going to make Stanfield a lot more competitive for businesses.”

Most importantly, Burgener said while the town is growing, it will keep that rural hometown charm that many in Eastern Oregon love. And the new developments only show how popular that feeling is becoming.

Stanfield finance director retires after 40 years

ANTONIO ARREDONDO
East Oregonian

STANFIELD — After 40 years serving the public sector, city of Stanfield finance director Jerry Carlson retired.

Carlson began his career as a Stanfield city administrator and worked various roles throughout his career, including spending time as a judge.

“I enjoyed my time here in the city,” Carlson said, “I appreciated my ability to work for the city.”

“He was a man of many hats,” deputy city recorder Sandy Endicott said.

Originally hailing from Springfield, Carlson moved to Eastern Oregon. Though he now resides in Hermiston, Carlson spent 19 years living in Stanfield. During his years working with the city, Carlson said he has grown to appreciate Stanfield.

Though he was instrumen-

tal in projects such as the 2009 Flood Mitigation Project and the yearly July 4 committee,

Endicott said Carlson never stepped into the spotlight, instead staying in the background and working behind the scenes. Endicott said Carlson viewed Stanfield as an “investment.”

After years with the city, Carlson said he will be spending more time with his family in Hermiston. Thursday, Aug. 11, was Carlson’s final day at the office.



Carlson

Position listings at

yellowhawk.org/careers

Questions? Call 541.240.8713

Family Medicine Physician, Registered Nurse, Public Health Nurse, Dentist, Integrated Care Counselor, Mental Health Therapist and more!

Competitive Wages

Excellent Benefits

16 Paid Vacation Days

Sign-On Bonus

Community Centered & Flexible

Loan Repayment Program

Employee Assistance Program

YELLOWHAWK
TRIBAL HEALTH CENTER

Start your career!

CONCEALED CARRY PERMIT CLASS

AUGUST 20th • 9AM

Hermiston Ranch-&Home

Valid 35-States, including Washington

Multi-State \$80
Oregon Included No Fee

Oregon Only \$45

MULTI-STATE

Shaun Curtain 360-921-2071

or email: ShaunCurtain@gmail.com | www.ShaunCurtain.com