

Pendleton flour mill fire cause still under investigation

by DAKOTA CASTETS-DIDIER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Investigators continue working to determine what sparked the fire more than a week ago that tore through the Grain Craft flour mill in Pendleton as well as plans for the future of the burnt out building itself.

Assistant Chief Anthony Pierotti with the Pendleton Fire Department said a structural engineer came Wednesday, Aug. 17, a week after the fire, and Grain Craft “is going to find a demolition company.”

Pierotti also said an investigation is ongoing as to the cause of the fire. The fire department continues to keep a firetruck on-site to “knock down” the smoke

and combat any potential flare-ups. “All is status quo,” he said.

Although the situation has remained unchanged, roads surrounding the mill have steadily reopened, and Grain Craft dispatched members of its leadership team to walk the site last week.

James Reeder, owner of the Outlying Perspective, a drone operator from Athena, flew a specialized drone on Aug. 17 on behalf of Grain Craft into and over the mill to create a 3D model of the building to help determine its structural integrity and to find any remaining hot spots.

A timeline for demolition has yet to be established, but there are discussions of opening an on-site asbestos testing facility, according to Pendleton Buildings Official Ty Woolsey.



The burned-out structure of the Grain Craft flour mill in Pendleton continues to smoke Aug. 11, 2022, a day fire destroyed the building.

James Reeder/The Outlying Perspective

PENDLETON

Convention center to hire staffer

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Convention Center is getting a new full-time staff member, and the city’s water filtration plant is getting new filtration membranes for a little more than \$2 million.

The Pendleton City Council approved those and other expenditures at its meeting Tuesday, Aug. 16.

Pat Beard, Pendleton convention center manager, requested the new hire.

The number of events and event days at the convention center has grown 30% since 2017, Beard stated in a memo to the council. In 2022, the center contracted 355 event days, including 55 new events at the Vert Auditorium.

“Events are outgrowing staff,” Beard reported. “The cost for an additional utility worker with benefits would be \$63,447 per year. This expense can be recovered through lower overtime costs and temp services. Additionally, other line items can be

tightened to absorb the additional needed position.”

The council also approved the request for new ultrafiltration membranes. Public Works Director Bob Patterson and City Manager Robb Corbett, along with Tim Smith, control systems manager, and Sean Tarter, water superintendent, in a memo to the council explained the membranes provide a physical barrier for extremely effective public health protection against disease-causing organisms in the river.

The city will spread the cost over two years, paying 30% this fiscal year and the rest in 2024.

The council also awarded a contract of almost \$6.7 million to High Desert Aggregate & Paving of Oregon to relocate Runway 29’s threshold, new taxi lanes and apron rehabilitation.

The terminal building blocks air traffic control’s view of part of the threshold, according to Airport Manager Steve Chrisman’s memo to the council. The relocation also

would correct some confusing geometry where the taxiway enters the new threshold. This makes the runway safer for public travel. The new taxi lane also creates more shovel ready area for hangar construction. The apron rehab involves an overlay of aging and raveling asphalt.

Funding for the project comes from two sources.

The city in July received a \$4.96 million grant from the Federal Aviation Administration’s Airport Improvement Program for crucial safety improvements to runways in small airports in Oregon. The rest comes from the 2021 federal coronavirus rescue package, which received prior council approval.

The city’s portion is \$268,856, which comes from facility charges to Boutique Air passengers, according to Chrisman. The only direct fiscal impact of the projects is the capital outlay cost during the time it takes to collect the passenger facility charge match, which can often be many years.

Umatilla County board approves new position, equipment requests

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County is getting a new service coordinator position for the county’s developmental disabilities program.

The county board of commissioner at its meeting Wednesday, Aug. 17, approved the new position, which is to create consistency with monitoring requirements of foster and residential homes and employment sites. The county estimated the annual costs of the position is about \$110,000, and carryover dollars from the 2021-22 developmental disabilities budget will cover that.

The expenditure was one of several the county board approved at the meeting.

The board gave the OK for a new concrete vault toilet for Harris Park. The cost of delivering the unit in 2023 to Harris Park comes to \$30,355.20.

Commissioner John Shafer

serves on the Wildhorse Foundation board. A grant from the foundation is to pay \$14,000 of the cost, leaving a remainder of \$16,355.20. The county applied for an Oregon Parks and Recreation Department grant to cover some or all of that amount. If that grant were to fail, the county’s public works department still has money in the budget to cover the tab.

The board also authorized public works to buy a new power broom from Papé Machinery, Pasco, for \$62,397. This 2021 broom is to replace an older model in the fleet, which the department planned on selling at auction later this year.

The board gave the sheriff’s office the go-ahead to buy new restraint systems by Safe Restraints Inc. for patrol vehicles. The cost of four WRAP systems and 20 associated ankle straps is \$7,602.37. Federal program funds will cover the expense.

County commissioners

also approved the reclassification of a medical assistant to an office assistant II position to work almost full time in Pendleton’s school-based health centers.

Umatilla County Health sponsors and staffs the centers. Alisha Lundgren, the health department’s deputy director, in a memo to the board explained the county for more than a year has tried to fill a vacant medical assistant position while the nurse practitioner and two counselors in the centers need office assistant support rather than medical assistant support.

In other business, the county board presented the first reading to update the county department organization ordinance and organizational chart and set a second reading for its next meeting. And the board approved contracting with Michael Bergstrom of AgriNorthwest, Kennewick, as a consultant on the central pipeline project.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Washington man faces manslaughter after fatal car crash near Pendleton

PENDLETON — Law enforcement booked a Washington state man into the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, on Wednesday, Aug. 17, in connection with the death of a La Grande woman.

Kari Lindeman, 49, was killed when the Ford Fiesta she was driving collided with a Dodge 3500 pickup driven by Gabriel Velasquez, 55, of Kennewick, who was traveling in the wrong direction in the eastbound lane near milepost 216, 5 miles east of Pendleton, according to Oregon State Police.

Lindeman died at the scene, OSP reported. Velasquez suffered serious injuries. An emergency helicopter flew him to Providence St. Mary Medical Center, Walla Walla.

The Umatilla County District Attorney’s Office has charged Velasquez with first- and second-degree manslaughter, driving under the influence, reckless driving and six counts of recklessly endangering another person. The court appointed Pendleton attorney Craig Russell as Velasquez’s lawyer.

According to court documents, Velasquez pleaded not guilty on all the charges against him. He is scheduled to appear in court for a pre-trial conference on Aug. 31.

Fire damages M-F branch of BMCC

MILTON-FREEWATER — The Milton-Freewater branch of Blue Mountain Community College is still open for business

as normal despite a fire causing considerable damage to the building early in the morning of Monday, Aug. 15.

BMCC Chief Operating Officer Patrick Sisneros said most of the damage is to the exterior of the building, and the college is working with its insurance carriers to determine the cost of the damage.

A news release from the Milton-Freewater Fire Department said its personnel as well as Milton-Freewater Rural Fire were dispatched to the college at 5:51 a.m.

No one was injured in the fire, and the cause is under investigation, according to the release.

Sisneros said the fire started in a dumpster near the building.

East Umatilla Fire & Rescue, other departments respond to stubble fire near Helix

HELIX — East Umatilla Fire & Rescue responded to a 40-acre stubble field fire Wednesday afternoon, Aug. 17 on Vansycle Road and Kupers Road north of Helix.

The Weston-based department at about 4:15 p.m. dispatched a brush truck, water tender and an ambulance, which served to rehabilitate firefighters. East Umatilla Fire called for assistance from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Umatilla Tribal Fire Department and Milton Freewater Rural Fire Department.

No injuries were reported and no structures were lost on this fire.

Suzie Reitz of East Umatilla Fire reported the cause of the blaze is unknown.

— EO Media Group and Walla Walla Union Bulletin

BLUE MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SURPLUS AUCTION

Wednesday, August 24, 2022

BMCC Health Educ. Bldg and NW Parking Lot
2411 NW Carden Ave, Pendleton, OR

Preview & Registration: 9 AM - 10 AM

• Silent Auction*: 9 AM • Live Auction: 10 AM

*Silent auction bids will end 5 minutes after last live auction item is sold.
Cash, VISA/MC or debit card payment will be accepted

- Dental Assisting Equipment & Furniture
- Diesel & Maintenance Equipment
- Used Vehicles

For details, visit:

<https://bluecc.edu/SurplusAuction>

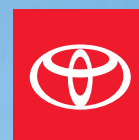


Items sold “as-is”; sales are final; purchased items must be removed 8/24 (or by 3pm 8/25 by special arrangement)



QUESTIONS?

(541) 278-5930 or Email: sstahl@bluecc.edu



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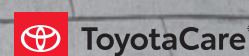


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