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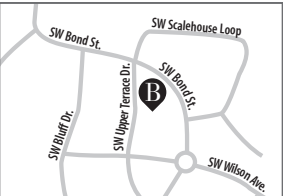
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LOCAL, STATE & REGION

PUBLIC DEFENDERS

Plan to get more lawyers: pay them more than contract rate

BY ZAEEM SHAIKH
The Oregonian

Officials with the Oregon Office of Public Defense Services have a proposal to ease the shortage of court-appointed attorneys to represent low-income criminal defendants.

Entice lawyers to temporarily join the ranks of public defenders by paying them more than those already under contract.

The need is acute, but the money is not yet there, advocates for the plan have said.

As of Friday, 189 people

accused of crimes in Oregon lacked attorneys, and 86 of those are felony cases, according to the office. In March, four people facing criminal charges filed a class-action lawsuit against the state over its failure to appoint them defense lawyers. To address the shortage, the office wants to match the \$158 hourly rate that federal public defenders receive to lure lawyers not under contract to represent adults and juveniles in custody in the state.

The office typically pays \$105 per hour for murder

cases or those involving juveniles and \$75 per hour for all other cases.

But bringing on additional lawyers and paying them more would require approval and additional funding from state lawmakers, on top of the nearly \$13 million the Legislature already allocated in February. The agency has a two-year budget of \$355.9 million and contracts with nonprofit law firms and independent lawyers who take on public defense cases.

Funding the \$158-hourly rate increase until July of next

year comes with a projected price tag of about \$2 million, according to the office.

Any changes won't happen quickly, some members of the 10-person commission that oversees the office said in a July 22 meeting. "More money will help us get there; I did not see any magic bullet to get lawyers for unrepresented people tomorrow," said Steven T. Wax, Oregon's former top federal defender and a commission member.

In letters to the commission, Oregon Supreme Court Chief Justice Martha Walters

has recommended that defense lawyers be able to negotiate hourly rates higher than \$158 for complicated cases and for the new rates to be extended to out-of-custody clients as well.

Stephen Singer, the office's executive director, said that would cost millions more.

Walters has also suggested recruiting retired judges to help resolve cases and conduct trainings. An additional idea would be to recruit volunteers who are not yet qualified to represent clients to work under the supervision of lawyers.

PORTLAND TO OPEN LATEST CAR-FREE BRIDGE



Sean Meagher/The Oregonian

Portland will open its latest car-free bridge on Sunday with a day of activities. The Congressman Earl Blumenauer Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge, which only allows pedestrians and bicycle riders, crosses Interstate 84 at NE Seventh Avenue. The Blumenauer Bridge joins several other bridges that do not allow cars: Tilikum Crossing and Ned Flanders Crossing.

Stash Tea to move headquarters to downtown Portland

BY KRISTINE DE LEON
The Oregonian

Stash Tea Co., founded in 1972, is preparing to move its headquarters and retail store from a Tigard business park to downtown Portland.

The company will occupy a 7,000-square-foot space at SW Yamhill Street and Ninth Avenue. The space will house the company's offices and a retail store with a tea bar. Stash has 35 employees in Portland.

The move comes after the company's lease of its office space near the Bridgeport Village shopping center comes to an end, said Daniel Kerbel, vice president of global marketing at Stash Tea. He said the decision to move to downtown Portland is part of the company's rebranding efforts to get back to its roots.

"For us, it's important to be connected to the pulse of Portland," Kerbel said. "We are proudly a Portland brand. We love the type of talent we can hire out here, and ultimately, it's our roots. So we want to be very true to our roots."

LOCAL BRIEFING

Sheriff's office seeks help to identify suspected thieves

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office is asking the public to help identify a man and a woman believed to be involved in numerous thefts from vehicles parked at trailheads throughout the county.

After stealing from the vehicles, the two individuals are alleged to have gone to Walmart in Bend to purchase gift cards using stolen credit and debit cards, the sheriff's office said Friday in a news release. The man has a tattoo on each forearm and a large tattoo on the right side of his neck. The woman has a thin build and a large tattoo on her left forearm.

Anyone with knowledge on the matter is encouraged to contact the sheriff's office at 541-693-6911. The reference case number is 22-38722.

The sheriff's office added that it wanted to remind people not to leave valuables unattended in vehicles, and in some cases, the duo have been able to use the stolen credit or debit cards

before the victim even realized their vehicle was broken into.

Bend sets open house for home energy score program

Bend's home energy score program will be the focus of an open house and question and answer session Monday at city hall.

The proposed program rates how efficiently a home uses energy. It gives each home a numerical score based on physical properties like types of windows and insulation and the amount of greenhouse gases a home emits.

Homeowners in Bend who wish to sell their properties would be required by the program to obtain home energy scores before they can list their homes on the market. They are then required to share their home energy scores with potential buyers.

The program was set forth by the Bend Community Climate Action Plan to encourage energy efficiency and transparency when it comes to home energy costs.

Implementation would effectively create a new step in the home selling and buying process. Hillsboro, Milwaukie and Portland have already implemented home energy score programs. Based on these established programs, the estimated cost of a home energy assessor to perform an audit would be between \$150 and \$300.

In 2016, Bend conducted a sector-based inventory of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the city. Residential energy accounted for 29% of emissions while transportation made up 36%.

The Climate Action Plan's goal is to decrease fossil fuel emissions by 40% by 2030.

The home energy score open house will be held in hybrid format Monday at 3 p.m. Attendance is permitted online and at the council chambers at city hall, 710 NW Wall St. in Bend.

COVID-19 community levels for Central Oregon

The Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention monitors levels of COVID-19 to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest data. Levels can be low, medium or high and are determined by looking at hospital beds being used, hospital admissions and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area.

On Thursday, the CDC ranked 11 Oregon counties at high levels of community spread, 20 at medium and five at low.

The agency listed the following levels for Central Oregon:

Deschutes County: Medium
Crook County: Medium
Jefferson County: Medium

Precautions the CDC recommends for communities with medium levels:

- If you are at high risk for severe illness, talk to your health care provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions.
- Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines
- Get tested if you have symptoms

— Bulletin staff reports

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