

COMMUNITY

# Umatilla increases water and sewer rates

City unable to transfer desired amount to reserves without 4 percent hike

BY SEAN HART  
HERMISTON HERALD

Umatilla residents will soon be paying more for city water and sewer services.

At the Umatilla City Council meeting Tuesday, members approved a resolution raising both water and sewer rates by 4 percent beginning July 1, so residents will see the rate hike on their August bills.

City Manager Bob Ward recommended adopting the increase because the city was not able to generate enough

revenue with the current fees to transfer \$100,000 from each account into reserves for future maintenance and expansion. He said smaller, more frequent rate increases are also more preferable than the double-digit increases for both services the city adopted about two years ago after 15 years without rate adjustments.

“Both of those increases were very significant rate increases due to the neglect of looking at those programs for so long,” he said. “At the time, we promised that we would not wait that long, that we would come back with more frequent, lesser increases as needed. ... In those 15-year periods when we didn’t make any rate increases, we ended up actually taking money out of reserves to pay our day-to-day operating costs, so we want to avoid being back in that posi-



Ward



Trott

tion.” Ward said, even with the increases, Umatilla’s rates will be less than Oregon and eastern Oregon averages based on a recent study by the League of Oregon Cities.

According to the LOC’s 2014 Water Rate Survey, which included data from 168 cities, the average residential water bill for 5,000 gallons with a .75-inch meter was \$31.73 in eastern Oregon and \$34.88 statewide, and the average residential wastewater bill for 5,000 gallons with a .75-inch meter was \$40.25 in eastern Oregon and \$43.84 statewide.

With Umatilla’s rate increase, residential wa-

ter customers will pay a \$12.88 base rate for a .75-inch meter plus \$1.30 per 1,000 gallons — up from a \$12.38 base rate and \$1.25 for water consumed. The total for 5,000 gallons will be \$19.38. Single-family residential units will pay \$39.94 for sewer services, up from \$38.40.

Umatilla will still offer a water hardship rate — \$9.75 base plus \$1 per 1,000 gallons — available for residents whose income does not exceed 125 percent of the federal poverty rate and a 10 percent water discount for senior citizens 65 and older.

Resident John Nichols said he and many other Umatilla residents live on a fixed income, and, although he has refused to consider discounted rates in the past, he may be forced to do so.

Resident Jack

McWhinney also questioned the rate increase, stating people in Umatilla work hard but don’t make much money.

Mayor Dave Trott said he believed city officials were doing their best to manage taxpayers’ money. He said, however, the city must maintain its water and sewer systems in order to continue providing the needed service to residents.

“We have an aging infrastructure,” he said. “The longer it goes, the worse it gets. ... We have to do what’s best to see that the aging infrastructure for the city is repaired in a timely fashion. Somebody has to pay for it. I’m sorry, but that’s us. I know people have tight budgets, and I know fixed-income people have tighter budgets, but we all share in this together. I honestly don’t know what else we can do.”

In other City Council news:

- The Umatilla municipal judge administered the oath of office to five new Umatilla Police Department reserve officers who recently completed the Bi-county Reserve Academy: Kimberley Carrier, Thalia Leon, Calvin Meade, Jordan Robeson and Fernando Sanchez.

- Council members approved a new three-year collective bargaining agreement with the Umatilla Public Safety Association for non-administrative UPD officers that provides a 5 percent wage increase the first year and 3.5 percent increases in each of the second and third years.

- Mayor Dave Trott read an annual proclamation designating May 3 through May 9 as Two Rivers Correctional Institution Employee Recognition Week.

# OSU uses drones to conduct air temperature research

Initial test flights made near Hermiston

OSU EXTENSION SERVICE

Scientists at Oregon State University announced this week that they are measuring atmospheric temperatures with fiber optic thermometers suspended from unmanned aircraft using methods and equipment tested near Hermiston.

According to an OSU Extension Service release, with funding from the National Science Foundation, John Selker is buying two new unmanned aerial vehicles — known as UAVs or drones — to loft sophisticated measuring instruments he designed. The research will study part of the Earth’s lower atmosphere, which is poorly understood and has been difficult to study.

“These two technologies together will add orders of magnitude to the precision and resolution of our atmospheric measurements,” said Selker, a hydrologist and professor in OSU’s College of Agricultural Sciences. “We’ll be able to take a continuous slice of data through space and time, getting information that no one has been able to capture before.”

## More details

Read the complete release from Oregon State University Extension service at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/release/2015/04/osu-uses-unmanned-aircraft-take-temperatures-air>



PHOTO BY ROBERT PREDOSA

An unmanned aerial vehicle flies adjacent to a wind turbine near Hermiston.

According to the press release, the high-powered thermometers use fiber-optic cable, similar to that used for telephone and internet communication. By measuring tiny pulses of light zipping along spun-glass strands, the fiber cables capture thousands of temperature readings along their length, detecting differences as slight as 0.01 degree Celsius.

In early-morning test flights near Hermiston, Selker’s OSU colleagues Michael Wing and Chad Higgins suspended a 400-foot sensing cable — not much thicker than a kite string — from an OSU-owned quad copter, the press release stated. They flew the aircraft high enough that the tip of the cable just touched the ground. The cable reported temperatures every 13 centimeters.

The researchers started the flights at sunrise to see how the atmosphere develops in the boundary layer, the lowest portion of Earth’s atmosphere, as the sun’s heat

begins to move the air.

The Earth’s surface and near atmosphere — the area up to about 1,000 meters above the ground — is a critical zone of feedbacks between air, water and earth, Selker said. He said until now scientists have had a hard time taking comprehensive measurements of the lower atmosphere.

“Typically, you’d have to take readings from a fixed point, a tower or a balloon,” he said. “Now, instead of measuring one or two or three points at a time, we can measure a million points.”

Such detailed measurements may shed light on how clouds and rainstorms develop, how air pollution gets diluted, how pollen moves across the landscape and other atmospheric dynamics.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### School district hosting college fair

The Hermiston School District will host the North Central Oregon College Fair from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. April 16 in the Hermiston High School Commons.

Representatives from more than 30 post-secondary opportunities, including colleges, trade schools and the military, will be available to answer questions regarding admissions, scholarships and academic programs.

High school students throughout eastern Oregon are welcome to attend.

“The North Central Oregon College Fair is a convenient and fun way for families with high school students to learn

more about what they need to do to prepare for college, college life and activities, as well as meet the representatives that have all of the latest information on scholarships and majors,” Hermiston High School Counselor Jacque Brandow said in a press release.

### Breath of Life to benefit cystic fibrosis research

The second annual Breath of Life fundraiser for cystic fibrosis is scheduled for May 9 at Armand Larive Middle School. The event will consist of dinner, desert, a silent auction, live band and bounce houses for children. Doors open at 5 p.m., and the dinner and auction start at 5:30

p.m. Tickets are available to purchase now at Java Junkies in Umatilla. They can also be purchased at the event. Cost is \$10 for one person or \$15 for a couple. Children 10 and younger get in free. All funds raised at the event go directly to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation of Oregon in Portland. The money is used for research to find a cure.

### Veterans benefits discussion planned

A discussion about veterans benefits is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. April 22 at the Stokes Center Senior Center, 195 Opal Place, Irrigon. For more information or to RSVP, call 541-922-6420.

## Blue Mountain Community College

Student Spotlight: Did You Know?



Jacob Hurbach  
BMCC AAOT Student/Baseball Team Member

Jacob Hurbach came to BMCC two years ago from Sherwood, Ore., to play baseball for the Timberwolves and to be closer to his family in Hermiston. “BMCC has really helped me by setting me up for a future at a four-year college. I feel BMCC does a great job of transitioning high school students into college. When I give tours to recruits for baseball, the one thing I always bring up is how nice of a transition BMCC is from high school,” Jacob says. Jacob will also transition well into a four-year school, where he plans to study international business and marketing so that he can one day take over his family’s business.



## Have you heard about the BMCC bond?

BMCC wants to continue to provide a high-quality education for students so they can succeed like our many distinguished alumni! Check out the bond page on our website to learn more about how BMCC could continue to provide an affordable education for family-wage jobs, a safe and secure learning environment and protect the community’s investment. Look for the bond on the May 19, 2015, ballot!

[www.bluecc.edu/about-bmcc/bond-measure](http://www.bluecc.edu/about-bmcc/bond-measure)

BMCC is an equal opportunity employer and educator.



Emily Ann Smith



PILOT ROCK HIGH SCHOOL  
Congratulations! We are so very proud of you.  
Love Mom & Dad

Tell your favorite graduate how proud you are in our Graduation 2015 special section in the East Oregonian and Hermiston Herald & share their "Then" & "Now" Photos!

\$25.00

Private Party Only

Publishes: May 30<sup>th</sup>  
Send in your text and photos to [psmootz@eastoregonian.com](mailto:psmootz@eastoregonian.com) or bring to Paula at the East Oregonian office by May 18<sup>th</sup>.  
Mailing address: Attn: Paula Smootz  
211 SE Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate's School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Message to Graduate: \_\_\_\_\_

## Attention Parents: Don't Miss the Bus!



Join us Thursday, April 23 from 6-8 pm OR Saturday, April 25 9:30-11:30 am at Sunridge Middle School Sign-up Now! Space is Limited!

Register at [www.readyforkindergarten.org](http://www.readyforkindergarten.org)

READY!  
for Kindergarten

FREE Parent Class  
FREE Child Care  
FREE Books & Toys  
FREE Meal

Questions? E-mail [terfofpendleton@gmail.com](mailto:terfofpendleton@gmail.com)  
Brought to you by The Children’s Reading Foundation of Pendleton