

# Umatilla mayor, city manager up for review

Hermiston Herald

The performance of both Umatilla's mayor and city manager will be reviewed in the coming month.

At the Tuesday, Feb. 7 meeting councilor Mel Ray asked to add an executive session to the agenda to discuss Mayor Dave Trott's performance.

Under ORS 192.660(i) a city council can meet in closed session "to review and evaluate the employment-related performance of the chief executive officer of any public body, a public officer, employee or staff member who does not request an open hearing."

Trott requested the city recorder put it on the agenda for the council's next regular meeting on March 7 as an open hearing.

Trott had previously requested a special executive session to review city manager Russ Pelleberg's performance on Jan. 25. The city council did not take any action after the meeting that night. Pelleberg's annual review is scheduled for an executive session on Feb. 21.

Trott raised questions with a Hermiston Herald reporter outside the Jan. 25 executive session about Pelleberg's initial job application and his discipline of city personnel.

Pelleberg was hired in Umatilla in 2013 as the public works director and was promoted to city manager in March 2016.

The application he filed in 2013 — acquired by the Hermiston Herald through a public records request — showed a stint as the assistant manager of Columbia Irrigation District in Kennewick from 2010 to 2012.

Under reason for leaving Columbia Irrigation District Pelleberg wrote "elimination of position." Public

meeting minutes from a May 2012 meeting of the irrigation district's board, also obtained in a records request, show the board voted to terminate Pelleberg's employment.

The attached instructions to then-manager Keith Martin, signed by each member of the board, state that Pelleberg was to be terminated for "unsatisfactory performance" and given two weeks pay but "leave immediately."

However, current Columbia Irrigation District manager Howard Ellison said the district hasn't filled the assistant manager position since Pelleberg's dismissal. He noted that Martin was also dismissed by the board after Pelleberg's departure.

Pelleberg's application also states that he received a Master of Business Administration with a concentration in executive management (2004-2007) from Breyer State University, among other degrees. Breyer State University is an on-line school not accredited by the U.S. Department of Education.

Trott also said he had concerns about the way Pelleberg had handled a disciplinary letter to city planner Bill Searles, who he said had submitted a formal grievance against Pelleberg to the city's human resources department. When asked about the grievance, Searles declined to discuss it until the city council had a chance to consider it.

Pelleberg said he had no comment for the newspaper other than to note that the city council did not feel it necessary to take any action or make any public comments after the meeting.



Pelleberg



Trott

# New Umatilla dept. keys on growth

By JADE MCDOWELL  
Staff Writer

The city of Umatilla created a community development department at its Feb. 7 meeting and hopes to hire a director to lead it next month.

The city plans to hire a community development director to run the new department starting March 1, and to add an administrative assistant/accounting clerk for support sometime after. The department will be tasked with improving livability and economic development in the city.

City manager Russ Pelleberg said adding the new positions will allow city hall to move forward more quickly with new projects to improve the city.

"I think this is truly an investment in our community," he said.

The city's personnel committee recommended the council adopt the resolution that would add the new director to the city's pay scale on the same level as the finance director, public works director and police chief. Councilor Roak TenEyck, who sits on the committee, said finance director Melissa Ince told them the city has the money to go ahead with hiring the new positions, and the



HH FILE PHOTO

The Umatilla community development department was formed to focus on economic growth and livability in the city. A director will be hired.

committee "recognized the need for more help around the city."

On Tuesday the council also approved a resolution creating a low income sewer rate, mirroring the low income water rate the council has used for a few years. Both programs allow homeowners to apply to receive a monthly 10 percent reduction in their utility bill by showing proof of low income through their tax returns.

Pelleberg said there "hasn't been a great interest" in the water program, with only eight residents currently receiving the lower rate, so he expected similar numbers on the

sewer side and did not think there would be more than a \$500 per year impact on the city's budget.

The council meeting was more full than usual thanks to the attendance of several teenagers on the city's new youth advisory committee. The committee, made up of two Umatilla High School students from each grade, will set its own agenda and operate with the guidance of former city manager Bob Ward. It is chaired by UHS senior Cameron Sipe and will make recommendations to the city council.

Councilor Mark Ribich said he believes the youth advisory committee is an important step for the city,

because the council wants to make decisions that will help the community's youth feel like Umatilla is a place where they would want to build their future.

"Thank you all for joining this team, and I can't tell you how excited I am to have you," he said.

Governor Kate Brown's proposed budget would close the Oregon State Police crime lab in Pendleton and cut funding that pays for detectives on the Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team (BENT). At the request of Pelleberg and Umatilla Police Chief Darla Huxel, the council approved two letters in support of continued funding for both. Councilors and audience members were also encouraged to attend the legislature's Ways and Means Committee meeting on Feb. 17 at 5 p.m. at Hermiston High School to make their voices heard on those and other funding issues.

Pelleberg told the council that he has agreed with the city managers of Hermiston, Stanfield and Echo to pursue state funding or other grant money to plan a river trail that would follow the Umatilla River from its mouth at the Columbia River all the way up to Echo.

## Irrigon celebrates 60 years

A community event is planned in celebration of Irrigon's 60 years of incorporation.

People are invited to decorate their vehicles, honk their horns and bring noise-makers. The event begins with the Irrigon Proud Parade Saturday, Feb. 25, with line-up at 2:30 p.m. in the parking lot at A.C. Houghton. Other activities are planned at 3:30 p.m. at Irrigon City Hall/Library. It includes a cake reception, special speakers, Irrigon ROCKS Rock Painting, a silent auction and balloon

release.

The fun continues from 5-7 p.m. with a bonfire at Irrigon Marina Park. Food will be available for purchase from Judy Scott's Chuckwagon.

For more information, contact the Irrigon Chamber of Commerce at irrigonchamber@irrigonchamber.com or 541-922-6259.

## Cheese Days to offer up some local cheesy goodness

Tillamook Cheese Days are returning to the SAGE Center.

A hearty plate of lasagna, Caesar salad, bread, a cookie and beverage is \$5 available Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The SAGE Center is located at 101 Olson Road, Boardman. An interactive visitor

center, people also are invited to learn about sustainable agriculture and energy.

In addition, squeaky cheese curds and other specialty cheeses will be available for purchase during the event.

For more information call 541-481-7243 or go to [www.visitsage.com](http://www.visitsage.com).

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