

None injured at industrial fire in Stanfield

Umatilla County Fire District 1 responded around 6:05 a.m. Tuesday to an industrial fire in Stanfield. The fire, which damaged portions of the outside of the Morstarch factory on 405 Hoosier Rd., was mostly contained by 8 a.m.

Eldon Marcum of UCFD said the fire was likely caused by one of the dryers at the factory, which he said caught fire and set some bins ablaze. He said

no one was injured in the blaze, and most of the damage was to the outside of the facility.

"They've had problems in the past," Marcum said of the dryers at the factory. "That was probably what caused it."

Marcum said he didn't know the cost of the damage, and members of the company did not want to comment on the fire.

— Jayati Ramakrishnan



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Umatilla County Fire District 1 crews work to put out a fire Tuesday morning at Morstarch, a potato starch manufacturing facility on 405 Hoosier Road, Stanfield.

World War II paratrooper will take to the skies again

Walt Liebe's family gave him wings for his 94th birthday over the weekend in Hermiston.

Liebe, a 94-year-old lifelong Hermiston resident, served during World War II as an Army Paratrooper in the 11th Airborne.

On a yet-to-be-finalized date later this summer, Ageless Aviation will be flying one of its Boeing Stearman aircraft, a two-seat open cockpit biplane that was the primary training aircraft for American WWII pilots, to Hermiston to give Liebe a half-hour flight as a way to thank him for his service.

Liebe was heavily involved in the fight to recapture the Philippines from the Japanese in 1945, and participated in the now-famous "Raid on Los Banos," a civilian prisoner-of-war camp holding 3,000 American, British and Dutch civilians behind enemy lines since 1942.

Liebe's paratrooper unit used amphibious vehicles and an air-drop in collaboration with Filipino locals to attack a prison camp more than 30 miles behind enemy lines, rescuing all captured civilians and returning them to the American lines with-

out losing a single prisoner in the battle.

Later, as the war drew to a close, Liebe was handpicked to be private security for Gen. Douglas MacArthur during the peace treaty signing aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo harbor officially ending the war.

After the war, Liebe worked for decades at the Umatilla Army Depot before retiring.

Over the weekend, Liebe's extended family, following a tradition established annually since the early 1990s, held a family reunion surrounding Liebe's birthday celebration. Family member from coming from all over the Pacific Northwest gathered in Hermiston to celebrate along with many of Liebe's local friends. It was there that the surprise gift was announced of a nostalgic flight in a WWII-era aircraft through the Ageless Aviation Dreams Foundation.

The date of the flight has not yet been worked out, but is expected to be sometime in early August.

More information about Ageless Aviation Dreams Foundation is available on their website, www.agelessaviation-dreams.org.

Budget testimony focuses on preventing cuts

By JADE McDOWELL Staff Writer

Eastern Oregon residents told state legislators that increasing revenue needs to be part of the plan for the next biennium.

The Joint Ways and Means Committee, which is responsible for crafting budget policy for the state, listened to more than two hours of testimony from a packed house at Hermiston High School on Friday evening.

Some of those who spoke included a plea to raise corporate taxes to keep important services like education and public safety from suffering the significant cuts proposed by Gov. Kate Brown and legislative leaders.

"We should not have to be here pitting services against each other," said Ginger Ogle of Pendleton.

As a former teacher, she said she was "begging" the committee to raise corporate taxes. The state could not expect to improve educational outcomes for Oregon students, she said, while continuing to make budget decisions that led to shorter school years, larger class sizes and fewer programs.

Others in the healthcare industry said taxes need to be raised to prevent proposed cuts that will cause low-income Oregonians to lose health insurance, while Joy Post said new revenue was needed to save programs like those that help her care for her disabled son in her own home.

Preserving funding for Eastern Oregon Developmental Disabilities Resources, which is on the chopping block in the governor's proposed budget, and maintaining funding levels for the Oregon Consortium of Family Networks brought out a crowd of yellow-clad



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

The legislature's Joint Ways and Means Committee met at Hermiston High School Friday and took testimony from Eastern Oregon residents.

supporters who advocated on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities and their caretakers.

Nazario Rivera, a Good Shepherd Health Care System employee, said scaling back the Oregon Health Plan as proposed would harm low-income families who cannot otherwise afford insurance.

"The families we serve in the ER wait until the last minute (to seek treatment) because they can't afford health insurance," he said. "When asked to follow up with their primary care provider they are unable to do so."

On the law enforcement side, more than a dozen people asked the committee to reconsider the governor's proposal to close the Oregon State Police crime lab in Pendleton and cut funding for drug task forces, including the Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team, known as BENT.

They pointed out that evidence samples would need to be sent more than 200 miles away to the Clackamas lab, while forensic analysts would have to travel equal-

ly as far to testify in court or provide training. District attorneys and police chiefs from the region also pointed to homicides where the evidence, say in an outdoor crime scene, would have been destroyed if analysts needed hours or days to arrive from Portland.

"With these types of scenes, time is of the essence," said Umatilla Police Chief Darla Huxel.

Students from Blue Mountain Community College and Eastern Oregon University also asked legislators to fund higher education in the state at a level that would not require more than a five percent increase in tuition. Larissa Golightly said BMCC helped her get her higher education back on track after health problems had previously derailed it. Carlin Sacco said the college gave her an opportunity to pull herself out of homelessness.

Farmers, ranchers and 4H students showed up to decry proposed cuts to agricultural extension centers. Bryan Wolfe of Hermiston said the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Cen-

ter has helped his family — now in its sixth generation of farming — grow better-quality crops more efficiently.


Other funding initiatives that citizens supported through testimony Friday included the Oregon Cultural Trust, K12 education, noxious weed control, mental health and addiction services, and community-specific projects such as the Farm II project that would help BMCC and the city of Pendleton replace the Round-Up pavilion with a center giving students hands-on experience with livestock handling and other agricultural subjects.

— Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.



PHOTO BY KURT LIEDTKE

Walt Liebe displays one of his gifts at a combination family reunion and birthday party Saturday at the Hermiston Senior Center. Liebe shows off the paperwork that will allow him to take flight later this year with Ageless Aviation.



Oregon Department of Transportation

STIP PUBLIC MEETING

FEBRUARY 27

LEARN ABOUT FUTURE TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS PLANNED FOR EASTERN OREGON

IT'S AS EASY AS 1-2-3

The Oregon Department of Transportation invites you to attend a Public Video Conference Meeting regarding the Draft 2018-2021 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The 2018-2021 STIP identifies major Oregon transportation projects proposed for construction between 2018 and 2021. Meeting participants will hear information on how projects are selected for funding and review projects identified for the eastern Oregon region. Interested parties are encouraged to attend this meeting at a site in your area, or connect on-line with your computer, tablet or smart phone (see below for web connection details).

Date/Time: Feb. 27, 2017 • 6-8 p.m. Pacific Time
(Ontario site: 7-9 p.m. Mountain Time)

Meeting Locations: Eight eastern Oregon sites listed below

1 Attend at one of these eight meeting sites Feb. 27, 6-8 p.m.


Burns - Harney County Courthouse Basement Mtg. Room, 450 N. Buena Vista	La Grande - Eastern - Oregon University Inlow Hall, Room 013, One University Blvd.
John Day - Oregon Telephone Conf. Room, 155 W Main Street	Boardman - Blue Mountain Comm. College 300 NE Front Street
Baker City - Public Library 2400 Resort Street, Baker City, OR	Enterprise - Wallowa County ESD 107 SW 1st Room #105
Pendleton - Blue Mountain Comm. College Emigrant Hall Rm. 128, 2411 NW Carden Ave.	Ontario - OR Dept. of Transportation Office 1390 SE 1st Ave. (7:00 p.m. Mtn. Time - Ontario site)

2 Or, connect remotely to the Feb. 27 meeting via computer, tablet or smart phone.
If you can't make it to one of the above meeting sites, you can connect to the meeting on-line at Zoom.com. Type <https://zoom.us/join> in your internet browser, enter Meeting ID: 175-119-566 and password: odotstip. This Zoom connection information is also posted on the ODOT Region 5 web (see below)

3 Busy Feb. 27? View the STIP information anytime at www.tinyurl.com/odot-region5.

There you will find project listings, maps, comment forms and other information about Oregon's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.

Have questions about the meeting, Zoom connection or ODOT website, call ODOT Public Information Officer Tom Strandberg at 541-963-1330 (email: thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us). This meeting is open to the public and accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities. To request an accessibility accommodation, please call 541-963-1330 or statewide relay 711 at least 48 hours in advance. Meetings sites are accessible to persons with disabilities per ADA requirements.



We hope to see you Feb. 27




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