

# Standoff ends with arrest of suspect

Man sought in shooting held off police for 4 hours

By PHIL WRIGHT  
STAFF WRITER



Alex Ahumada

A Boardman man, suspected in a recent shooting, is in custody Thursday after a long standoff with police.

Local and Oregon State Police worked together to bring in Alex Luis Ahumada after he barricaded himself Wednesday inside a Boardman home.

Police wanted to question Ahumada, 33, about the May 19 shooting of Carlos Ramirez. Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said Thursday that Ahumada is no longer a person of interest — he's officially a suspect.

“Ahumada did not want to talk to us, which is fine,” Edmiston said, because his department will compile evidence and reports for prosecutors to charge Ahumada.

The moves that led to the capture began after an anonymous caller at 2:49 p.m. told the Boardman Police Department that Ahumada was at the residence at 70072 Kunze Lane, just outside the Boardman city limits, according to a written statement from the Morrow County Sheriff's Office. Boardman police immediately alerted the sheriff's office because the location was in county jurisdiction. The sheriff's office in turn told Hermiston police, according to Edmiston.

The sheriff's office reported it confirmed Ahumada “was barricaded inside the residence at the Kunze Lane address.” Edmiston said Morrow County law enforcement arrived first and secured the area, and Hermiston police at about 4 p.m. sent its two general detectives, the drug task force detective and Randy Studebaker, the investigative lieutenant.

Edmiston said Ahumada had a felony parole violation warrant and 15 arrests and 43 citations to his name.

And he was not alone in the residence. The sheriff's office therefore asked Oregon State Police to send its SWAT team to help.

Lt. Mike Turner, commander of state police out of Pendleton, said about 20 team members responded. The team is statewide, he said, with troopers in Pendleton, La Grande and elsewhere, and coordinated with the Morrow County Sheriff's Office and Hermiston police.

“We can call on them, and they respond without question and are always willing to assist,” he said.

SWAT team members started to arrive around 6:15 p.m. and trickled in over the course of several hours.

Ahumada was in a standoff with police for four hours, the sheriff's office reported, before the SWAT team arrested him.

Turner said he did not want to talk about the tactics the team used, but Ahumada came out on his own. Edmiston said the team was there to ensure the safety of everyone involved.

State police booked Ahumada into the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, a little after midnight Thursday, but police remained at the Boardman home until almost 3 a.m.

Edmiston said the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office should get the case by Friday morning.

## Local districts discuss sexual harassment policies

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN  
STAFF WRITER

As Oregon's largest school district deals with fallout from a sexual abuse scandal, other schools explained their own policies and the cultures in their districts.

Portland Public Schools have recently come under scrutiny for the way they have handled sexual harassment complaints, with a report revealing that for decades, the district ignored or didn't properly deal with complaints about teacher Mitch Whitehurst sexually abusing students.

Many local administrators said they feel their policies adequately address reporting and complaint procedures.

David Marshall, Hermiston School District's human resources director, said the district investigates every complaint they receive.

“Typically, it will start with the principal,” he said. “They'll kind of do an investigation. If a complaint like that comes in, everything else gets dropped.”

He said one of the first things the district will do is determine if they need to involve law enforcement. If so, they will let officers conduct the investigation, and the district will step back.

“If charges are pressed, it's pretty straightforward,” he said. “But if law enforcement doesn't do anything, we review it.”

He said sometimes, even if the complaint doesn't rise to the level of law enforcement, the district will discipline the staff member according to its own policy.

He said all staff receive annual online training about sexual harassment, both a general training and one specific to grooming, and reporting other staff members.

Umatilla School District Superintendent Heidi Sipe said the district keeps investigatory files forever, for both founded and unfounded complaints. Complaints are color-coded based on the discipline enacted.

“Staff can request (by contract) that items be removed from their personnel file,” Sipe said via email, noting that file is separate from investigatory files. “However, I've never removed, nor ever been asked to remove, anything related to discipline for a situation regarding a student.”

Stanfield Schools Superintendent Beth Burton said that as per House Bill 2062, upon hiring a new staff member, the district requests information about whether the person was ever the subject of a substantiated report of child abuse or sexual misconduct in their previous jobs.

She said all staff are also required to take several annual trainings online, which range from general safety issues and mandatory reporting, to trainings specifically about sexual harassment. Staff are tested on the subjects, and required to pass.

“We actually provide paid time to complete the trainings, because they are important and staff members need the information,” Burton said in an email.

Additionally, she said, students are given instruction about the school's sexual harassment policies.

Burton said the district has not been compiling complaint numbers on a yearly basis, but may begin doing so to better review complaint practices and procedures.

John Larson, a former Hermiston teacher who is now the president of the Oregon Education Association, issued a statement last week condemning the inaction of Portland Public Schools, and encouraging other schools to revisit their own policies.

Larson said the OEA itself does not set policies, and that is up to individual school districts. He said districts typically also offer their own trainings about sexual misconduct and mandatory reporting.

The Teachers Standards and Practices Commission has an online database of all the complaints that have been substantiated against teachers, dating to at least 1997. In 2018 so far, six teacher licenses have been revoked statewide. Of those, four had to do with sexual harassment or abuse of a student. The incidents had all taken place in previous years, but the license revocations were not enacted until 2018.



Vendors offer their wares Thursday evening at the first Hermiston farmers' market of the season.

STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

By JADE MCDOWELL  
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston's new farmers market was buzzing with activity on opening day.

The Maxwell Market — with a new name, new management, new date and new location — opened Thursday under a large shade canopy on the corner of South First Place and West Locust Avenue. About 16 vendors were there when it opened at 4 p.m., selling produce, flowers, crafts, jewelry, meat, cheese and other items.

Some of them were first-time farmers market vendors. Teresa Horn of Eastern Oregon Mobile Slaughter, selling specialty smoked meats, said she had been thinking about coming for years but never done it.

“It's already been worth coming,” she said about half an hour into the market. “We've sold several packages and people seem to like it.”

The farmers market almost didn't happen. Mitch Myers, who had been approached by the city about taking over the market, briefly canceled the event after a dispute with the city caused a delay in the opening of a permanent shade structure that was to be the market's new home. But after the city offered to host the market downtown instead, Myers put together a new plan to host it on a different site.

Teresa Engbretson of Paterson, Washington, was selling fresh flowers Thursday through her business My



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

Hermiston Farmer's Market vendor Chris Finley, of 3rd Generation Farms, holds out a bunch of radishes Thursday night for her customer to see.

Garden Overfloweth. She said the switch from Saturday to Thursday was a little tricky for her since she has a major market to attend Friday mornings, but she loved the new location.

“There seems to be a lot of traffic along here,” she said.

The addition of a massive shade tent was a new development that was a big hit with vendors and shoppers as temperatures reached near 90 degrees.

“I'm in love with this,” said Rod Frerichs, pointing upward. “This is totally nice.”

Frerichs' booth was called Homemade Happiness, featuring home decor by him and sewing crafts from his wife. He said he had a booth on the last day of the farmers market last year and decided to commit to the entire summer this year. He said he had liked the market being in the heart of downtown and on a Saturday, but

he could also see the benefits of the new arrangement, particularly since some vendors had commitments to larger markets on Saturdays.

“I'm optimistic,” he said.

Live music was scheduled to start around 5 p.m. but by 4:30 p.m. the market was already busy.

The Walchli Farms booth was doing steady business selling bundles of fresh asparagus for \$1.50 apiece.

Like many of the produce stands, as the growing season progresses the farm plans to add more produce options such as watermelon.

Shoppers Jeanie Bloodsworth and Sherry Thompson said they were looking forward to more produce as the season goes on, but were excited for the market's opening. Thompson was waiting on a bouquet of flowers from My Garden Overfloweth.

“I always get some for me and some for Mom,” she said.

Bloodsworth said she thought the shade tent on a busy corner of First Place was the “best location so far” for the farmers market.

“I saw them putting up the tent the other day and thought, ‘That's so nice,’” she said.

The Maxwell Market is set to run Thursdays from 4-8 p.m. through the rest of the summer.

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