

Port of Umatilla adopts budget

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

The Port of Umatilla Commission adopted its 2018-2019 budget this month, capping what manager Kim Puzey said had been a positive year at the port.

The commissioners approved a budget of \$5.6 million. Puzey said there were no major changes to the budget, but there has been some growth despite having a major disadvantage.

"Geography is our biggest challenge," Puzey said, noting that the port is situated on basalt, which he said makes it expensive to develop.

He said the construction of data centers on port property has been the biggest driver of growth.

"There are good prospects for future data centers — that's a once-in-a-generation economic development opportunity for the region," he said.

Puzey said while the way data centers are counted can be variable, he counts five on port property, and said more could be developed.



In 2004, the Port of Umatilla installed a new \$3.8 crane at the facility on the Columbia River outside of Umatilla.

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The port has also tapped into some other opportunities for economic development, Puzey said. He said a business out of Portland has an option to purchase 160 acres to construct solar arrays.

Puzey said he has spent much of his energy in the past two years working with a water user group comprised of local farm-

ers. The group is leasing a portion of the port's water rights in order to use some of the water for agricultural purposes.

He said the port anticipates \$200,000 in revenue from that group this year, and \$400,000 from them in the following year.

"That's water infrastructure we didn't previously have," he said.

The port's budget is divided into seven different funds: general, container dock, marina, grants and appropriations, strategic reserve, water rights and regional water.

The port commission adopted a general fund of \$3.1 million. That number includes an estimated \$832,000 that will be collected in taxes. The port dis-

tributed levies a tax of \$0.015 per \$1,000 assessed value on its constituents.

The marina fund remains open, but the port has not operated a marina since September 2013, and will close the fund in 2019.

The port's container dock fund is \$464,862. Cargo shipping is divided into three main categories — bulk, break-bulk and container. Puzey said the Port of Umatilla imports bulk products like fuel, and exports wheat, another bulk product.

"We have been importing molasses this year, handling log exports, and serving several customers with refrigerated containers, thus increasing revenues above what we projected," Puzey wrote in the budget message.

He said container shipping is now nonexistent at the Port of Umatilla, a trend at almost all Pacific Northwest ports.

Puzey said one of the port's biggest challenges

is still working toward the transfer of Umatilla Army Depot property.

"That'll help a lot," he said.

He said overall, he has been pleased with the growth of the port in recent years.

"We're doing quite well in grants and appropriations," he said, noting that the port is the fiscal agent of a \$1 million grant to the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce. The port also received \$2 million in the transportation package from the 2016-2017 legislative session, and that money will become available in 2019-2020.

Puzey said the port budget has continued to increase annually.

He said things were largely as he expected while creating the budget for next fiscal year.

"I have a good grasp of where we are," he said. "I didn't have any huge disappointments or surprises."

Larson bids farewell to fire district

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

Reta Larson marked the last day of a 31-year career doing what she's always done — working.

Often the first face people see when they walk into the Umatilla County Fire District Station 21 office, Larson has kept the department running as executive assistant and board clerk. Wednesday was her last day.

"I should have ripped up her resignation letter," said fire chief Scott Stanton with a smile. "She's been like my right-hand person. It's crystal clear how integral she is to the department."

Larson will stay on as the UCFD board clerk, Stanton said.

Originally from Rexburg, Idaho, Larson and her husband moved to Hermiston in 1986 for his job. When the job didn't work out, the two found themselves unemployed, so Larson started looking for a job. She initially applied next door, as a dispatcher for the police department.

"The chief called me and said, 'You didn't get the job, but the job you really want is next door.' They sent my application over, and they hadn't even opened this job yet," Larson said.

She started out with tasks



Reta Larson recently retired as UCFD's executive assistant after 31 years with the department.

like filing and correspondence, eventually moving into ambulance billing. Her role has evolved over time into a more managerial position. The longest-serving full-time employee for the department, Larson has seen four fire chiefs, and some major changes to the

way fire services operate in the area.

"I got hired back when the fire district was still part of the city of Hermiston," she said. The department separated from the city in 1998, and in 2016, passed a bond that allowed for the creation of Umatilla County

Fire District 1.

She said being present for the first transition in 1998 made it easier when the district was trying to pass the bond.

"We learned from that transition," she said. "Some things I knew that didn't go so well from that helped us be ahead of the game this time around."

Stanton cited Larson's years of background with the department.

"The amount of experience and institutional knowledge she has — that's the part that will be irreplaceable," he said.

She said throughout her time with the department money has continued to be the biggest challenge.

"That's always the challenge with fire departments — you're always too busy for the workload with the personnel you have."

But she said she has been impressed with the way the department is able to do its job efficiently, and praised the people she works with.

"It's been an awesome 31 years," she said.

Larson said she plans to stay busy with her eight grandchildren, and spend time on her farm with her horses.

"I don't really know yet, and that excites me," she said.



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I-84 SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS ON-LINE OPEN HOUSE

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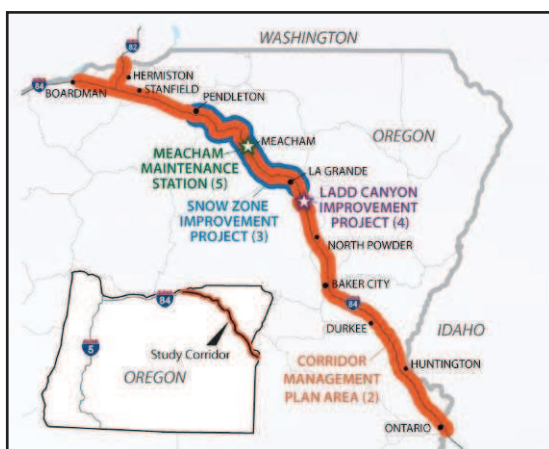
The site will be active through July 13



We hope you will take a few minutes to learn what we are planning and to get involved by providing your feedback and comments.

At this on-line Open House site you'll find information about...

- Past Improvement Projects:** Earlier enhancements constructed to help improve safety and operations along the I-84 corridor.
- Corridor Management Plan:** This planning study identifies and prioritizes the next strategies that will improve safety and operations along the interstate system.
- Snow Zone Safety Improvement Project:** A variety of devices along I-84 between Pendleton and La Grande will be installed in 2019-2020 to improve safety and operations during adverse winter weather conditions.
- Ladd Canyon Freight and Culvert Improvement Project:** A third eastbound climbing lane and other upgrades are being added in 2019-2020 through the Ladd Canyon area.
- Meacham Maintenance Station:** This outdated facility is being replaced. The new compound will improve response times, efficiency, and save equipment and energy costs.
- Comments and more information:** Take a short survey and provide feedback. This is your highways system and we greatly appreciate your input.



Questions about the site can be directed to ODOT Project Leader Sean Maloney 541-823-4025, or by email at sean.maloney@odot.state.or.us.

WORSHIP COMMUNITY

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First Christian Church
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Children's Church 10:00 am
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1 Pet. 5:7

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