

Legislature sending millions of dollars for local projects

By PHIL WRIGHT
Hermiston Herald

Almost \$5 million is coming to the Hermiston area to build a center to help people in a behavioral crisis. Those funds and a lot more came out of the 2022 short legislative session, which wrapped up Friday, March 4, four days ahead of its deadline.

Republican Sen. Bill Hansell of Athena said to speed up the session, his party on March 3 agreed to suspend the rules that required the full reading of bills before floor votes, a move the GOP used to slow down majority Democrats from ramrodding through their agenda.

Hansell during an interview March 3 said he would be heading back home after the final few bills go to a vote March 4. He said this short session was unusual because of the influx of federal money for allocations.

“So it was far more than what I remember the short session having available in the past, and it will be a one time opportunity type thing,” he said.

‘Spread the peanut butter

Rep. Greg Smith, R-Hepner, said he worked to bring state funding to projects in his district, which now spans Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman and Wasco counties.



Smith

“The projects within HB 5202 were requested by the communities,” Smith said, “and then I negotiated on their behalf, as a member of the full Ways and Means (Committee) and the Capital Construction Subcommittee.”

He said a big highlight is the \$4.59 million for the

Northeast Oregon Regional Acute Care Center that will be in the Hermiston area.

He said the facility will be a “navigation center” — a place for people suffering behavioral or mental distress who “need a place to to chill out for a couple of days” but have not broken any laws.

A navigation center came out of the 2021 session, but that is at the western end of his district in The Dalles. Smith said that’s quite a drive for police from Milton-Freewater, for example, especially in the winter.

This new center could go on property the Port of Umatilla owns, he said, or even the Columbia Development Authority site, the former location of the U.S. Army’s chemical depot near Hermiston.

He said while he has traditionally worked to obtain state funds for infrastructure and capital improvement projects, local governments, including the ports, cities

and counties, are doing well there. But when it comes to mental and behavioral health, he said, there are people in our communities who are hurting and need the help.

Still, Smith pointed to the \$1 million each for infrastructure improvements at regional fairgrounds and the nearly \$167,000 each that went to a number of smaller cities, including Spray, Fossil, Condon and Arlington. That kind of funding to small towns, he said, is akin to \$10 million in Portland.

“Let’s spread the peanut butter to everyone,” he said.

House Bill 4127, which would have pulled an additional \$1 million from the state general fund into the Oregon Department of Agriculture fund to compensate ranchers for wolf problems.

She was a chief sponsor of the bill, along with Smith, Hansell and fellow Republicans Rep. Mark Owens of Crane and Sen. Lynn Findley of Vale. But the bill faced strong opposition from Democrats and environmental groups and never made it out of committee.

Likewise, Levy and Hansell were the chief sponsors on HB 4154, which would have provided \$400,000 to expand the capacity of the fuel farm at the La Grande/Union County Airport.

“I didn’t get funding for either one of them,” she said. “Those were my top priorities.”

Hansell said he had two bills, one didn’t even get a hearing and one he had to

“gut and stuff” and it still didn’t go. He said there were 50 bills with Democrats as chief sponsors that moved forward in the Senate, compared to just four bills with Republican chief sponsors.

He also said the short session was biting off more than it could swallow.

“We’re trying to do far too many major policy bills in the short session,” he said. “It was never intended for that.”

Hansell said there are two fronts when it comes to legislation: policy and projects. Policy proposals he tends to bring in the long session, he said, and in this short session he worked only on projects. That work involves finding sources to fund everything from infrastructure improvements to building construction.

He said that takes building relationships, collaboration and teamwork to deliver funds to crucial projects in Eastern Oregon.

AARP volunteers offer free tax help in Hermiston, Boardman

Help will be available by appointment for the next month at two locations

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

Tax season is here, and once again the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program is helping locals with their 2021 tax forms.

“People are a little bit scared of the IRS,” said Steve Frazier, who is helping with the program. “They want to do the right thing, but they get nervous. We’re here to help them do the right thing.”

In a regular day, he said, he and other volunteers will help around a dozen people.

On Feb. 22, he met with a couple of people who expressed gratitude for the help. He received their information, imputed data



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald
Steve Frazier, AARP tax preparation volunteer in Hermiston, looks over a person’s taxes on Feb. 22, 2022.

into his computer and asked them to return after for discussion. Frazier let the clients know their taxes would be sent to the IRS once they approved.

Their taxes would be completed within the same day as their appointment, he said.

Frazier said this is how

most of his appointments occur — clients enter and their needs are met quickly. That is, however, if their taxes are simple. If a person’s taxes are complicated, as when they involve a person’s business, volunteers advise clients seek out tax services from paid professionals.

GETTING ASSISTANCE REQUIRES AN APPOINTMENT

To receive help, people must make appointments from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Local sites are in Hermiston and Boardman. Volunteers are at New Hope Community Church, 1350 S. Highway 395, Hermiston (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays through April 13). The Boardman volunteers are at the Port of Morrow, 2 Marine Drive, Boardman (Mondays through April 11).

Volunteers said people do not need to be AARP members or even seniors to receive help. Services are provided in English and Spanish. To register, call 541-612-1307. For more information, visit www.aarp.org/money/taxes.

Volunteering to help

A former fireman, Frazier said he does not have a deep background in accounting. But he has, he said, received training for the work he is doing on behalf of AARP.

Frazier, a Hermiston resident, said he started this work 12 years ago, after

he retired. Helping people with their taxes, he said, was something he could do, and it was enjoyable.

According to Frazier, many volunteers come to this service the same way he did. They stumble upon it, discover it is something they are capable of doing and offer to lend a hand, he

said. He added there are volunteers who have worked in banks, but none are professional accountants.

To get potential volunteers up to speed, AARP provides study materials to them in October. Then, there are training classes to understand the tax program being used. Also, there are tests volunteers need to pass to be certified by the IRS and AARP.

Still, Frazier said, it is not hard.

“If you learn where to put the information, the program does a lot of the work,” Frazier said.

He added that deep knowledge of tax law is not required of volunteers.

Currently, there are nine local volunteers, serving Hermiston and Boardman.

“We used to have quite a bit more,” he said.

NAVIGATING A CHANGING TIME AND MEETING CUSTOMER NEEDS

Pacific Power remains dedicated to delivering safe, reliable, affordable power now and for years to come.

We recognize the impact that price increases have on our customers. As we make needed investments in our system and navigate economic trends, we will continue to take measures to keep our rates low and to capture savings for our customers.

On March 1, 2022, Pacific Power filed a general rate case requesting an overall rate change of \$82.2 million, or 6.6 percent, to become effective January 1, 2023. The company’s requested change will be reviewed by the Public Utility Commission of Oregon and if approved, the expected impact on the average monthly bill for an average residential customer using 900 kWh per month would be \$13.01 per month. The primary reason for this filing is to support our wildfire mitigation efforts, including vegetation management, as part of our larger commitment to providing resilient, safe, reliable electricity for our customers.

We understand the impact that price increases have on our customers and will work to mitigate that impact as much as possible. Customers can visit pacificpower.net/wattsmart for energy- and money-saving tips and information. Energy Trust of Oregon also offers energy efficiency programs and information to Oregon residents and businesses. Contact Energy Trust of Oregon at energytrust.org or 1-866-368-7878 for more information.

Copies of Pacific Power’s rate request application are available at our main office, located at 825 NE Multnomah Street, Portland, Oregon 97232 and on our website at pacificpower.net/rates. Customers may contact Pacific Power for additional information about the filing by mail to Pacific Power’s main office at the address above, or by calling 1-888-221-7070. TDD/TTY users can call the National Relay Service or 1-888-221-7070. Para un representante que habla español, llame al 1-888-225-2611.

Requests to receive notice of the time and place of any hearing on this application may be directed to the Public Utility Commission of Oregon at 201 High Street SE, Suite 100, Salem, Oregon 97301-3398 or by calling 1-800-522-2404.

The purpose of this announcement is to provide our customers with general information regarding the company’s price increase application and the expected effect on customers. Calculations and statements contained in this notice are not binding on the Public Utility Commission of Oregon.



PUBLIC NOTICE DOCUMENT
OREGON PRICE CHANGE APPLICATION



Good Shepherd Outreach & Events

March is National Colorectal Awareness Month

Good Shepherd’s Community Health & Outreach offers free Colorectal Cancer Screening Kits. Contact us to learn more!

Diabetes Prevention Program

Starts April 14th

Walk with Ease

March 21st - April 29th, M/W/F

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