

# Festival by design

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

Design work is now underway for a project that will transform a section of downtown Hermiston.

The city revealed its \$1.25 million festival street project on Monday with a public open house.

"We're really excited to see what this is going to do for downtown," City Manager Byron Smith said.

The project's first phase will cover NE Second Street between Gladys Avenue and Main Street, creating a pedestrian-friendly, curbside street in front of City Hall that can be blocked off during events such as an art show or beer festival. Possible design elements include trees, fountains, hanging flower baskets, brick work, ornamental lamp posts, decorative benches and other functional art.

The second phase will extend that project north to the planned senior center on Ridgeway Avenue, and the third phase would center around an arch on Second Street in front of the Hermiston Conference Center welcoming traffic into downtown.

Clint Spencer, city planner, said construction on the first phase will start sometime during the summer of 2017, and if all goes well with funding and design the other two phases could also be built next year. Funding for the project comes from

property tax revenue gathered by the Hermiston Urban Renewal Area.

During Monday's open house, visitors were asked to study a series of photos depicting festival streets in other cities and place a sticker on elements they particularly liked. Some of the most popular elements were an interactive fountain with jets of water shooting up from the ground, a wrought-iron arch over the road, decorative lamp posts and trees.

Spencer said design elements chosen by the public will likely be used to tie other areas of downtown into the festival area over time.

"Lighting, benches, trash cans, things like that will absolutely carry on to other locations in the city," he said.

Residents at the open house were also asked to rate nine potential uses for the street. In the past the road has been blocked off for large events such as the Cinco de Mayo celebration, but Spencer said once the more attractive and pedestrian-friendly festival street was built the city would also be open to closing the gate for smaller gatherings too.

"The more small events we have, they have less impact on the businesses, but we also draw more foot traffic downtown," he said.

Judy Gormley, who owns Neighborhood Books

& Gifts on Main Street with her husband, said that she likes the idea of a festival street, but wishes it was going to be on Main Street instead of in front of city hall. She said when the city uses Second Street for events, the foot traffic tends to stick close to city hall and not move down Main Street.

"If there's some way, signs or whatever, that would draw foot traffic to the whole area, that would be good," she said.

Design for the project will be done by GreenWorks, a landscaping architecture company out of Portland, in conjunction with a five-person citizen committee and city staff.

Mike Faha of GreenWorks said his firm has worked in Eastern Oregon multiple times, including upgrades to downtown Pendleton and the area around the Round-Up Grounds ahead of their 100th anniversary.

He said the company has been reading several different planning studies the city of Hermiston has completed, including its brand new public art plan, and will incorporate those ideas into planning of the festival street.

"I think those are great studies to build off of," he said. "I think this project will be a catalyst for some of those other plans."

Contact Jade McDowell at 541-564-4536.

IN BRIEF

## UEC lands federal grant for solar array

Umatilla Electric Cooperative has received a \$250,134 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Energy for America Program to help offset the cost of the Moyer-Tolles Solar Station east of Umatilla.

The system, which came online in February, includes 3,952 solar panels generating 1.3 megawatts of electricity. It cost \$2.5 million to build, financed mainly with New Clean Renewable Energy Bonds.

"We are pleased that this grant will further reduce the cost and increase the value of this project to our members," said Robert Echenrode, UEC general manager and CEO. "Such a significant investment on the part of the USDA shows UEC is on the right track with our renewable energy program."

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack said the Rural Energy for America Program helps businesses create jobs, helps farmers and rural businesses reduce their carbon footprint and helps the country move closer to energy independence.

"These investments in clean energy are good for the environment, are good for each business's bottom line and they support the broader rural economy by encouraging the production of renewable energy sources," Vilsack said in a statement.

## Echo woman arrested on driving, drug charges

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office arrested an Echo woman in Hermiston on Friday on driving and drug crimes.

According to a written statement from the sheriff's office, the arrest occurred about 3 a.m. after deputy Nathan Rankin investigated a suspicious vehicle complaint near the 1600 block of Airport Road, Hermiston.

He found Patsy Annabell Elkins, 41, of 811 E. Gerone St., Echo, driving erratically in a vehicle that was revving its engine.

"She showed many signs of impairment and appeared to be under the influence of a stimulant," the sheriff's office reported.

Elkins told the deputy a white truck hit her vehicle and she chased the truck for two hours but did not catch it, did not get a license plate number nor call police.

Rankin arrested Elkins for driving under the influence of intoxicants and reckless driving and took her and her belongings, including a cellphone and purse, to the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton.

Jail staff checked the purse and discovered more than 20 grams of what they

suspected was methamphetamine, nearly 100 clear plastic bags, and a glass pipe and digital scales, both with residue indicating meth. The sheriff's office added delivery of meth, delivery of meth within 1,000 feet of a school, possession of meth, and supplying contraband to Elkin's charges.

## Sales vendor falsely representing school district

Hermiston School District is warning the public that a company selling advertisements on sports posters in not affiliated with the district.

According to a news release from the district, a salesman contacting local businesses about buying advertising is falsely claiming to be a representative of Hermiston High School. However, he is not connected to the school district and no money from the advertising will benefit Hermiston students or sports teams.

Ad sales for the 2016-2017 Hermiston High School sports calendar has already been completed, and any requests for future advertising or sponsorship will come from athletics director Larry Usher or athletics secretary Lindy Thompson.

# Summer party stabbing leads to attempted murder charge

By **PHIL WRIGHT**  
Staff Writer

The suspect in an August stabbing on Depot Lane in Irrigon faces charges of attempted murder and more.



Murillo

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson said a grand jury indicted Lalo Murillo, 22, of Hermiston, for attempted murder, first-degree assault and unlawful use of a weapon related to stabbing a man three times in the back during a party on Aug. 23. Nelson said the location of the wounds and the number led to the attempted murder count.

The victim, Ivan Salas Salas, 26, of Irrigon, has recovered.

Law enforcement in Cassia County, Idaho, arrested Murillo on Sept. 24, according to the jail's recent inmate information, on warrants and for resisting/obstructing officers and lying to police about his identity. Nelson said the Morrow County Sheriff's Office sent deputies to bring Murillo to the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, where he arrived Thursday.

Nelson said he would

arraign Murillo on the charges Friday afternoon.

Murillo has a 2014 conviction for third-degree assault, according to court records, and Hermiston police arrested him in June 2015 in connection to a drive-by shooting, which led to a conviction for felon in possession of a restricted

weapon. Hermiston police arrested Murillo again in May for a probation violation in the wake of a shooting that injured two males.

Murillo also has a misdemeanor assault case working its way through the Umatilla County Circuit Court. He posted a \$3,000 bond to get out of jail in that case, which has its next hearing on Dec. 19.

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For more information call 1-800-962-2819 in Pendleton or 541-564-4530 in Hermiston.

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