

Hermiston council prepares for leadership turnover

Manuel Gutierrez recognized for 15 years of service to the city

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The Hermiston City Council said goodbye to two members and saw three new ones sworn in during their Monday, Dec. 14 meeting.

It was the last meeting for Manuel Gutierrez, who did not run for another term in preparation for a move outside city limits, and David McCarthy, who lost his bid for reelection.

Mayor David Drotzmann presented Gutierrez with a parting award, recognizing him for 15 years of service to the city, including his recent eight-year stint on the council, a previous four-year term on the council and years on the city's budget committee and Hispanic Advisory Committee.

"I've looked up to you and your relationships with our Latino community," Drotzmann told Gutierrez. "You've been a strong advocate for our community, not just for Latino residents but for all residents, always advocating to make sure we're looking out, especially, for the 'little guy.'"

Councilor Roy Barron thanked Gutierrez for his



Nate Rivera/city of Hermiston

Hermiston city councilor Manuel Gutierrez hands a watermelon to a Portland resident in Pioneer Square in 2018. Gutierrez was recognized for his service to the city during his final city council meeting on Monday, Dec. 14, 2020.

example, noting it would be intimidating to be the only Latino member of the city council. He said if it weren't for Gutierrez, he might not have run for office when he did.

"You paved the way for other Latinos and people of color on this council," he said.

Newcomers Maria Duron, Nancy Peterson and Philip Spicerkuhn were sworn in at the end of the Dec. 14 meeting in preparation to take their seat at the

beginning of the council's first meeting of 2021. Councilors Doug Primmer and Rod Hardin, Mayor David Drotzmann and Municipal Judge Thomas Creasing also took the oath of office after being elected to another term.

During the meeting, the city council awarded Sineco Construction of Hermiston a bid for a \$357,000 water line replacement project during their Dec. 14 meeting.

"We did get five bidders on the project, which was a

good turnout from the bidding community," Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan told the council.

The project will replace 1920s-era pipes along Northwest Sixth Street, Northwest Seventh Street and West Ridgeway Avenue near Rocky Heights Elementary School.

The council also adopted a new fee schedule, combined into a single master document instead of having them spread out over various documents in each



Duron



Peterson



Spicerkuhn

department. City Manager Byron Smith said the change should make it easier for both staff and the public to find what they're looking for.

The public should also have an easier time finding other information and documents after a new version of the city's website planned to go live this week. In a presentation of the new layout, City Recorder Lilly Alarcon-Strong said the new website was designed to be much easier to navigate on a mobile phone, and more user-friendly for the public.

"A lot of questions I got (about the old website) were where do I find this, or where do I find that, and sometimes I had trouble finding things, and it would be things that I put on the website, so I can only understand what it was like for our constituents to find things," she said.

The new website features a mobile-friendly "scroll-free" design, a prominent search bar, a button to translate the site into various languages and direct

online submission forms to replace the PDFs that previously needed filled out and emailed or mailed in. It also organizes information, such as staff contact information and public records, into a single searchable page instead of farmed out by department.

Alarcon-Strong said the city had to change website providers after the Inter-Mountain Education Service District gave notice to cities that it would no longer be offering web services to municipalities. After putting out a request for proposals, the city chose Municode to design its new site.

After a discussion at the last city council meeting about the city dipping below the minimum reserve levels set by statute in September and October, Hermiston Finance Director Mark Krawczyk shared that in November the city's general fund was just shy of \$4 million over the minimum reserve level, thanks to property taxes beginning to come in.

Umatilla Chemical Depot gets mention in federal defense bill

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

An amendment regarding the former Umatilla Chemical Depot was included in the final National Defense Authorization Act passed by Congress on Friday, Dec. 11.

The Columbia Development Authority — a partnership between Umatilla County, Morrow County, Port of Morrow, Port of Umatilla and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation — has been working with the U.S. Army to turn most of the depot over to local control now that the land no longer functions as an active army depot.

A portion of the property has already been turned over to the Oregon Military Department for a National Guard training facility known as Camp Umatilla, but the CDA intends to use the rest for a wildlife preserve and industrial development.

Greg Smith, CDA director, said while the Environmental Protection Agency signed off on the depot as

clean, when the Army did a follow-up review out of "an abundance of caution" it determined that about 60 acres of property along the western side of the depot needed additional cleanup. Smith said the CDA is working with the Army to continue with the transfer of the rest of the depot, however, with the understanding that the Army would turn over the 60 acres later after any environmental hazards are cleaned up.

"If it's not clean, we're not taking it," he said.

The \$740 billion National Defense Authorization Act includes a line directing the Secretary of the Army to submit to Congress a plan to finish remediation activities

on the depot within the next three years. The Army is directed to submit the plan within 90 days of enactment of the NDAA.

Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley and Congressman Greg Walden have provided support for the CDA's efforts to get the Army to provide the depot land to the CDA while meeting the CDA's three criteria: that the land be free, clean and have adequate water for development. In May, they sent a letter to Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy urging the Army to complete the remaining cleanup.

Last week, Wyden said in a statement he was pleased to see the addition about the depot in the final

defense bill.

"This development marks a major step forward for Umatilla and Morrow counties, which have been working in good faith with the Oregon National Guard to transfer the historic Chemical Depot lands and property for multiple uses in Eastern Oregon," Wyden said. "I'm proud to have worked with Senator Merkley on legislation to hold the government accountable

and complete the cleanup work so National Guard members can train, and neighboring properties are protected for cultural and economic uses."

Smith said the CDA continues to make progress on clearing the final hurdles for transfer, which include sign-offs from a long list of federal government offices that have sometimes been slow to respond. Smith said in the past the Army's Base

Realignment and Closure department had handled interfacing with the various agencies, but lately he has found great success by reaching out to people in those agencies directly.

"It's really broken the log jam ... I just call them up, and they don't know who I am, but I introduce myself and say, 'Do you know you've been sitting on this document for six months?'" he said.

32nd Annual 'Light Up a Life' Fundraiser

Vange John Memorial Hospice
invites the community to
support your local hospice
through this fundraiser which
Takes place
December through
January 10, 2021

Your contribution to Vange John Memorial Hospice will illuminate a symbolic light and ornament in a window display area provided by Victory Baptist Church on Main Street. You may dedicate your light and ornament in honor of someone you admire or in memory of someone you miss.

All memorials and honoree names received during the campaign will be read January 17, 2021 at 6 PM on our local radio station, KOHU. An MP3 recording is available upon request.

A meaningful gift, your contribution will help you celebrate the life of loved ones during the holiday season and help us meet the needs of our hospice patients and their families all year long.

Join us for the
**Light Up A Life
Memorial/Honoree Reading of the Names**
broadcast on KOHU 1360AM
January 17, 2021 at 6 p.m.

Community Wide Memorial Service Postponed

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LIGHT UP A LIFE

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____

From: _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone Number _____

* Suggested donation for each memorial/honoree: \$15

Please mail check payable to:
Vange John Memorial Hospice
645 W. Orchard Ave., Suite 500
Hermiston, OR 97838
(541) 667-3543

Your canceled check will be your receipt.
(A Division of Good Shepherd Health Care System)

Please place a light and ornament in the window display to celebrate the life of:

- _____

Send acknowledgement of this gift to: Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

- _____

Send acknowledgement of this gift to: Name _____

Address _____

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Send acknowledgement of this gift to: Name _____

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