

HERMISTON

# Seniors concerned about city's role in new center

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

Plans for a new \$2 million senior center isn't all good news as far as some Hermiston seniors are concerned.

A presentation by Larry Fetter, senior center advisory board chair and city Parks and Recreation director, about the three possible locations for the new center was peppered with interjections by seniors fearful about what having the city as a landlord will mean.

"If we can't maintain it, we'll get kicked out," one woman said.

Fetter insisted repeatedly that the new building was being built because the city wanted to provide a place for its older citizens to gather, and that seniors would have priority use of the building from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. five days a week "forever."

"Our highest interest is that you be successful," he said.

But he also said he realized that the new arrangement in which the city owns the senior center building would be a difficult change for seniors used to the running the center



EO Media Group photo by Sean Hart

**Hermiston Parks and Recreation Director Larry Fetter gives a presentation at the Hermiston Senior Center about the new facility to be developed with a \$2 million grant the city received on behalf of the center.**

independently.

The senior center's board hasn't been left with much of a choice, however. They will no longer be able to use their current building at the Umatilla County fairgrounds after the land transfers from the county to Hermiston School Dis-

trict at the end of 2016. And vice chair Virginia Beebe told the group that the lack of participation in early fundraising efforts meant the center had raised a fraction of what was needed for a new building.

"None of you would listen," she told the seniors in attendance.

As time ran out to get a new center built before the 2016 deadline, the center obtained a \$2 million federal Community Block Development Grant. Only the city could apply for and administer that grant, meaning the city will own the new senior center.

The terms of the grant mean the center can only be used for events for people older than 50 for the first five years, but seniors questioned Fetter about what would happen after that. Would the money they put into furnishing the new center, stocking it with supplies and keeping the lights on end up in the city's hands if a new city council decided they wanted to use the building for other means? If the building was rented out in the evenings for events, would the city or the senior center get the money?

Fetter said the city had an agreement with the senior center board to dedicate the building for their use. He said the city had no intention of breaking that agreement.

"What possible reason would we have to evict you?" he asked.

He said for now the important question is which of three

sites the center should be built on: The old Goodwill building on 740 West Hermiston Avenue, the area where Ridgeway Avenue curves behind the public library and a parcel of land behind Wal-Mart on the corner of Northeast Fourth Street and Northeast Aspen Drive.

After the presentation, however, Jackie Kalberer said the presentation hadn't eased her worries that the city was just another government entity giving "lip service" to the seniors.

"We speak not just from fear but from experience," she said.

A third of the senior center's volunteers are over age 75 and Kalberer said she wasn't convinced that by the time the grant's five year restriction on non-senior use of the building was up, that the center wouldn't have lost its base of advocates keeping the city from using the building for other things.

"They can't lose," she said. "It's a really good deal for the city."

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

## ROBOTICS ROUNDUP

# Rookie Helix team rolling over competition, going to regionals

East Oregonian

A pair of shared first place wins by the rookie robotics team of Ethan Jack and Christina Monson of Griswold High School has coach Jack Bascomb excited.

Helix Robotics 8590 was captain of the Super Qualifier Winning Alliance Feb. 21 at Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum and the Qualifier Championship Winning Alliance Jan. 31 in Hermiston.

During the McMinnville competition, Jack and Monson represented Helix in the First Technical Challenge Super-Qualifier Championship. The duo competed in a pool of 22 teams and placed second by winning four out of five matches.

As one of the top four teams, they selected alliance partners for the finals elimination matches. As captain, Helix Robotics selected team 9060 Smarties, an all-girls team from Clara Brownell Middle School in Umatilla, and team 4412 Transformers from Hood River.



Photo contributed by Jack Bascomb

**Ethan Jack, second from right, and Christina Monson, third from right, compete as Helix Robotics #8590 during a recent competition at the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum in McMinnville.**

They competed against the first place team captained by team 7499 The Nerdy Girls from Clara Brownell, who chose team 8154 Modern Americans from Pendleton and team 267 EMP of Benson High School in Portland.

The Helix Alliance lost the first match of the final elimination best two out of three. They won the second

match and then tied the third. A fourth match was played and the Helix Alliance won.

Each of the three Helix Alliance teams received a Winning Alliance trophy and share the first place spot. The teams head to the State Competition the weekend of March 7 at Benson High School in Portland.

For more information, call Bascomb at 541-457-2733.

## BRIEFLY

### Citizens get to hear Pendleton's master plan

PENDLETON — To discuss its master planning efforts, the city of Pendleton will hold a master plan-sized meeting.

A city press release states the meeting will take place from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday and discuss the master plans for the city's water, sewer, and storm systems.

Representatives from Murray Smith & Associates, the city's master plan consultants, will also present information about the focus on capacity related projects, operation and maintenance staffing levels and aging infrastructure issues.

The work session is open to the public and will be held in city council chambers at Pendleton City Hall.

### Pendleton to hold meeting on new state test

PENDLETON — With testing season quickly approaching, the Pendleton School District and the Oregon Department of Education will hold a meeting to discuss the new Smarter Balanced assessments being introduced this year.

According to a district press release, officials will discuss how the Smarter Balanced assessment will affect the English and math portions of state testing.

After the presentation, the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions.

The meeting will be held at the Pendleton High School auditorium Tuesday from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. On-site child care will be provided.

### Meeting planned for Birch Creek assessment

PILOT ROCK — The Umatilla Basin Watershed Council will host a meeting Saturday, Feb. 28 in Pilot Rock for residents interested in guiding future management and restoration on Birch Creek.

Discussions are underway to develop a technical assessment and action plan along the creek, delving into the hydrology and ecological functions throughout the flood-prone watershed.

Public input is needed to understand existing conditions, as well as hone in on a long-range vision for projects moving forward.

The Birch Creek Assessment and Action Plan is a collaborative effort between the watershed council and several agencies. Birch Creek is a 16-mile tributary of the Umatilla River, and home waters for one-third of all the basin's wild steelhead.

The meeting Saturday is 10 a.m. to noon at the Pilot Rock City Council Chambers. For more information, contact watershed council Director Jon Staldine at 541-276-2190.

### Solar energy organizations host Pendleton event

PENDLETON — To espouse the benefits of solar energy for homes and business, Solarize Pendleton and Hire Electric will host an informational meeting about the subject Thursday at the Pendleton Convention Center.

Solarize Pendleton is a city program that offers zero interest loans with payments based on tax credit.

Hire Electric is a contractor based out of The Dalles that is a partner of the Energy Trust of Oregon. The meeting is 6 to 8 p.m.

### Deadline looms for Young Artists Competition

HERMISTON — Cash awards and an opportunity to perform in concert with the Inland Northwest Orchestra is featured during the Young Artists Competition.

The Inland Northwest Musicians is accepting applications for participation in its 15th annual event, which is scheduled in the afternoon of Sunday, March 8 at Hermiston High School, 600 S. First St. The competition is open to instrumentalists and vocalists up to age 25 in four age divisions, elementary, junior high/middle school, high school and young adult. Applications must be submitted by Friday.

Application forms are available at [www.inlandnorthwestmusicians.com](http://www.inlandnorthwestmusicians.com). For more information, contact Alice Massey at [amassey@wteclink.us](mailto:amassey@wteclink.us) or 541-379-5564.

# Heppner robotics takes first

East Oregonian

Heppner High School's robotics team won first place at a VEX Robotics Competition Feb. 21 in Redmond.

The primary members of the Heppner team include Bryan Fowler, Cade Arbogast, Kai Arbogast and Tom Gould.

Students use specialized equipment to design, build and compete against other teams. Computer programming is used to control their vehicle and they also drive it manually.

This year's challenge, called Skyrise, involves stacking tower sections and placing cubes on various height poles. Two teams form an alliance to compete. With the help from the Ukiah teams, Heppner students improved throughout the day, redesigning the vehicle and writing a new programming code. Heppner worked its way through the double elimination rounds and then won the finals in two straight matches.

Heppner Robotics previously competed in a pair of VEX Robotics competitions this season in Salem. The team is now preparing for the VEX Robotics Competition at the National TSA Conference, scheduled in June in Dallas, Texas.



Contributed photo

**Heppner Robotics team members Bryan Fowler, Cade Arbogast and Kai Arbogast celebrate after winning first place at a VEX Robotics Competition in Redmond.**

## STUDENT OF THE WEEK

**Sidney Webb**  
UMATILLA HIGH SCHOOL

Sidney Webb is an outstanding student athlete at Umatilla High School. Sidney, a junior, has a 3.57 cumulative GPA. Sidney models the term student athlete at Umatilla High School. Sidney is a leader inside and outside the classroom. Sidney is a 3 sport athlete that plays and excelled in volleyball, basketball and tennis. Sidney is the starting point guard on the Umatilla High School basketball team currently ranked 8th in the state. Outside of school Sidney enjoys fishing, hunting and all outdoor activities. She also enjoys cooking and hanging out with friends and family. Her favorite subject is math. After high school Sidney plans on staying close to home and enrolling in a nursing program to become an OBGYN.

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Join us as we host a lecture series to increase safety awareness on fall prevention, common home injuries and provide solutions to keep you and your loved one safe!

**Avoid Bathroom Dangers - CONCLUDED**  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 3:30 PM

Dangers exist all around your home, and unless safety precautions are in place, you leave yourself in danger. Aside from the kitchen, the bathroom is one of the most dangerous rooms in your home. Recognizing these dangers, and making some common sense decisions, will go a long way in protecting you and your family.

**Learn the 411 on Medicare Coverage**  
TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 3:30 PM

Medicare is a government-sponsored program that people over the age of 65 and those who meet their special criteria turn to for their social insurance. This program provides health insurance, normally to seniors. Come and learn more about what it covers and what it does not.

**Durable Medical Equipment Can Keep You Independent**  
TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 3:30PM

Durable medical equipment is any medical equipment used in the home to aid in a better quality of living. It is a benefit included through most insurance. In some cases, certain Medicare benefits may pay for them.

For more information or to RSVP, call us at (541) 276-1987 or visit us today!

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