

HERMISTON

City looks for feedback on landscape ordinance

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Hermiston's Community Enhancement Committee wants to see more green around Hermiston.

The committee is seeking public input on a proposed landscaping ordinance that would require plants and other decorative elements be incorporated into new development.

"Together, these elements of the natural and built environment contribute to the visual quality, environmental health and the character of the community," the ordinance reads.

Under the proposed ordinance, which will eventually make its way before the city council, plans for new multi-family dwellings must include landscaping on at least 15 percent of the developed property. New developments in industrial and central commercial zones must cover at least 3 percent of the property. And landscaping is required for 6 percent of the developed site in outlying commercial zones.

Landscaping in the ordinance is defined as "trees, shrubs, typical organic ground covers and lawns" as well as "courts, plazas, walkways, benches, sculptures, fences, or decks" built in conjunction with the greenery. For down-

town properties with nowhere to plant trees or grass, substitutes such as planters and decorative lighting can be submitted for approval.

Developers will have to apply for a landscaping permit with the city planning office to get their plans approved. The fee for the permit will be determined by the city council if the council passes the ordinance.

In a memo to the city planning commission before it reviewed the draft ordinance, city planner Clint Spencer said in helping the Community Enhancement Committee draft the ordinance, city staff studied similarly sized Oregon cities, most of which already have some sort of landscaping rules in place. Medford's 32-page ordinance regulates landscaping down to the distance between sprinkler heads, while Ontario's merely dictates the amount of ground to be covered.

"The city has approached ordinances from the short and simple path in the past," Spencer said, advocating for an approach more similar to Ontario's.

The draft of the ordinance can be found online at www.hermiston.or.us/landscaping-ordinance-draft and the community feedback meeting will take place May 7 from 4-6 p.m. at City Hall, 180 N.E. Second St. in Hermiston.

Hermiston to consider graduation at Kennison

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Hermiston School District is looking into changing the venue for graduation after an online petition gathered almost 900 signatures.

The petition asks the district to consider moving the ceremony from the Hermiston High School gym to Kennison Field to allow for more family members to attend.

"I just know that for my family, the amount of tickets isn't enough," petition organizer Tracy Gammell said.

Gammell has a son graduating at the end of the year and said the six tickets allotted to each student would leave out some of their extended family who want to attend. To gauge interest in approaching the school board about making a change, she created the petition on change.org and posted it to her Facebook page, where it took off.

"I couldn't believe how many people also felt that way," she said.

The petition has 891 signatures and counting.

Briana Cortaberria, district communications officer, said the district is aware of the petition and staff are compiling a report on the logistics of making the switch. She said the report will be presented at a school board meeting, most

likely the board's April 13 meeting.

Cortaberria said the district heard interest in the past — before the stadium improvements — of moving commencement to the football field, but the board decided against it. This petition, she said, gives the district a good reason to look at what it would take to host graduation at Kennison.

Gammell said she hopes that when all of the factors are considered, that it makes sense to move graduation outdoors, where the 2,200-seat stadium and sets of portable bleachers would allow for more people to attend.

Trailer's value increases by 65 percent

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

A Hermiston woman is stuck between an old trailer and a property tax bill that jumped 65 percent in a year.

But Umatilla County tax assessor Paul Chalmers said that's a product of the real estate market, not a county mistake.

Karen Haga said she and her husband own four trailers they rent in order to help fund their retirement. One of those trailers is a 1970 Golden West model at Vista Park Mobile Home Park, 1800 N.E. 10th St., Hermiston. County tax records show the trailer went from an assessed value of \$10,760 in 2014 to \$17,130 last year.

Haga missed the end-of-year deadline to appeal that

valuation, so she said they paid the taxes. But she questioned how the county increased the trailer's value 65 percent in one year.

Chalmers explained that Oregon law mandates counties track changes in the real estate market for all property types, from unimproved lots to family housing to commercial buildings, and compares those values with the counties' assessed values. Counties then send these sales ratio studies to the Oregon Department of Revenue for inspection, and if they pass muster the counties use the studies to set the tax rolls.

A couple of years ago the county opted to use square footage to calculate property values, he said, and not the component parts of a property, such as the number of

toilets a place has. Using that information speeds up the assessment process, he said.

Based on the type of manufactured home Haga owns and its 1,368 square feet, the property tax for 2014 was \$252. Chalmers said that is a jump over the \$165 from the year before, but the assessment from 2013 was an anomaly — it was too low. He showed that in 2012 the property's value was almost \$14,000, so in 2013 it should have been closer to \$15,000 or \$16,000.

Haga said while she maintains the 45-year-old home, she does not think she can sell it, nor can she trade it in because of its age. And moving it to private property and hooking into sewer, water and electricity would cost about \$5,000.

"It would probably fall apart going down the road anyway," she said.

Selling the mobile home, though, is not out of the question, according to Rachael Reynolds, data analyst in the county assessors office. Information she provided showed three mobile homes similar to Haga's in size, age and class sold in the county last year from a low of \$14,000 to a high of \$25,000.

Haga said her daughter rents this home, so they plan on keeping it. She said she wants others to be aware their property tax burden could shift so suddenly, and she sure does not want the county to increase rates again.

Chalmers stressed the county does not set property prices but only follows price trends.

Umatilla residents see cleanup day payoff

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Sunshine and warm weather helped encourage Umatilla residents to "slam dunk the junk" on Saturday.

Some people volunteered for work crews to help clean up neighbors' yards and public property. Others used the free dumping opportunity to do their own spring cleaning.

"It looks like folks have been pretty active all week long in cleaning up their own places," mayor David Trott said.

He joined a group of volunteers who had been cleaning up the South Hill, hauling away an old couch, a water heater and a "hodgepodge of things" from the yards of private property owners who agreed to let the volunteers remove the eyesores.

"We cleaned out a pretty sizable area," he said.

As the day wore on they switched to weeding around city hall.

Nancy Sandoval, the city recorder, was one of the volunteers helping pull weeds. She said she likes the idea of encouraging residents to join in a community-wide cleanup day.

"I think it creates a catalyst to let them know they have power to



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Volunteers help move a trailer full of discarded items from a yard in McNary during Slam Dunk the Junk.

change their community," she said.

Over in McNary, Roak TenEyck and Judy Simmons were leading a team of four community volunteers in cleaning up the yard of a woman with three small children. Two truck loads and a trailer later, the team had to head back with the emptied vehicles to pick up another round of broken bicycles and cracked plastic tubs.

The team leaders had driven through their assigned zone earlier in the

week and knocked on the door at problem properties, asking if they could come by on Saturday and help haul some things away.

In many cases, Simmons said, people said they knew their yard was a mess or they needed to get rid of a set of rusting appliances. But for reasons ranging from a recent heart surgery to a lack of vehicle, they hadn't done it.

"We're improving things little by little," Simmons said. "It takes time but look at just the improvement

we've made from last year. Properties are still clean. Once it's done people can maintain it but they just get overwhelmed."


Last year was Umatilla's first Slam Dunk the Junk event, marking a sharpened focus on cleaning up the community's image. Simmons said last year she had four pages of addresses that needed cleaned up in McNary. This year when she drove through with the same critical eye she filled up just one page.

City manager Bob Ward, who was using his own truck to help transport garbage to dump sites, said the event was growing as the day went on.

"It helps it's a nice day," he said. "People see us out and about and suddenly remember they've got things too get rid of, too."

Given the growth from Umatilla's first community cleanup event to its second, he said he hoped one day the town will eventually "work ourselves out of an event."

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.



RE-ELECT
Bryan Wolfe

District 3
Umatilla Electric
Board Member

- Proven leadership & experience
- Board member since 1996
- Certified credentials

Paid for by Bryan Wolfe
80897 Wolfe Lane, Hermiston, OR 97838

“ LET'S TALK ABOUT LIVING WITH RELAPSING MS ”

Join us for an MS LIVING EVENT. Hear from MS experts and others who are living with MS. Plus, get some answers about dealing with MS and information on an oral treatment.

When:
Friday, April 10, 2015 • 12:00 PM Pacific

Where:
Good Shepherd Medical Center
610 NW 11th St., Hermiston, OR 97838

Expert Speakers:
Hui Zhang - Richland, WA

A MEAL WILL BE PROVIDED. FREE PARKING.

Call 1-866-703-6293 to reserve your space or register at mslivingevents.com

EVENT ID: TR287584

See us at the Pendleton Home & Outdoor Show!

April 10-12 - Booth #12, #13 & the outdoor exhibit area

0% for...wait a minute... **84 months?**

DEERE SEASON

0% FOR 84 MONTHS

— AND —

\$500 OFF*1

IMPLEMENT BONUS



1023E Tractor



3032E and 3038E Tractors

0% FOR 84 MONTHS

— AND —

\$1,250 OFF*2

IMPLEMENT BONUS

During RDO Equipment Co.'s Deere Season Sales Event, get this amazing financing offer, plus implement bonuses, on new John Deere compact utility tractors.

Call 1-888-877-7935 or see your local RDO Equipment Co. dealership to steal this deal before it's over!

*Offer valid 2/3/2015 through 4/30/2015. Subject to approved installment credit with John Deere Financial. Fixed Rate of 0.0% for 84 months on 1E, 1R, 2R, 3E, 3R, 4M, and 4R Series Tractors. \$500 OFF implement bonus on all compact tractors except 3E Tractors. \$1,250 OFF implement bonus on 3032E and 3038E Tractors. Implement bonus is in addition to Low Rate financing and requires the purchase of 2 or more qualifying John Deere or Frontier implements. Some restrictions apply; other special rates and terms may be available, so see your dealer for details and other financing options. Valid only at participating US dealers.



JOHN DEERE



RDO
EQUIPMENT CO.

www.rdoequipment.com

<p>OREGON</p> <p>78200 South Hwy 207 Hermiston, OR 541-567-8327</p>	<p>5401 NW Rieth Road Pendleton, OR 541-276-6341</p>	<p>WASHINGTON</p> <p>1707 East James Pasco, WA 509-547-0541</p>
<p>95421 Hwy 206 Wasco, OR 541-442-5400</p>		<p>140 Midvale Road Sunnyside, WA 509-839-5131</p>