

HERMISTON EOTEC adopts \$12M budget

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The 2015-2016 budget for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center includes money to staff the center when it becomes operational next March.

The EOTEC board adopted a budget just shy of \$12 million for the coming fiscal year, including \$3.6 million for operations and \$8.4 million for construction.

Funding for the project comes from a mix of grants, money from the sale of the current Umatilla County Fairgrounds, the Tourism Promotion Assessment and

contributions from Umatilla County and the city of Hermiston.

Project manager Gary Winsand of Frew Development said storm, sewer and water mains are all installed at the site and Umatilla Electric Cooperative and Eastern Oregon Telecom should be done installing electric and telecommunications infrastructure by the end of the month.

In July the project will transition to vertical construction, with G-2 Construction scheduled to begin placement of footings for the event center building within two weeks. The

exterior of the event center is scheduled to be completed Nov. 1.

Business manager Heather Cannell told the board she has been working on interior details, including the layout of the event center kitchen, the placement of electrical outlets, selection of furniture and selection of event-scheduling software.

She said at the city's request she has applied for EOTEC to host the 2017 Oregon Mayors' Conference.

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



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hot-daka days

A man rides a Hodaka motorcycle down south 3rd Street on Friday in Athena. Hundreds of Hodaka motorcycle enthusiast from all over the county have congregated in Athena for their annual Hodaka Days celebration. The three-day event offers races, food and festivities and runs through Sunday.

Irrigon mechanic crushed, killed by truck

East Oregonian

An Irrigon man died near Boardman in what the Morrow County Sheriff's Office called a tragic accident. Lenard "David" Abercrombie, 57, was crushed while working under a truck bed.

Undersheriff Steve Myren said Abercrombie was something of a mechanic and Wednesday morning set out on a job. He did not return

that night, and Thursday his family contacted the sheriff's office to find him.

The family called Abercrombie's customers, Myren said, while the sheriff's office tried to retrace his steps. Then a person Thursday night at 9:26 p.m. called 9-1-1 to report finding someone trapped under a vehicle and possibly dead. The sheriff's office, Boardman police and others responded.

Abercrombie died between the partially raised tilt-bed of a truck and the vehicle's frame, according to a written statement from the sheriff's office, and there was "nothing in the investigation to indicate this was anything more than a tragic accident."

Myren said the it appeared Abercrombie was working on the vehicle's hydraulic system and there is no way to determine when he died.

Public art rules drafted

PENDLETON —A new ordinance creating rules for public art will be considered by the Pendleton City Council in July.

At an art commission meeting, Mayor Phillip Houk said the ordinance will have a first reading during the July 7 meeting and will receive a vote from the city council at the July 21 meeting.

Because of the considerable backlash to two privately-funded bronzes after they were approved, the commission drafted an ordinance that formalizes the public art approval process. All public art requests would require public hearings and approval at both commission and council meetings.

The commission also discussed the costs of building a sidewalk around the Esther Motanic statue at the convergence of Court Avenue and Dorion Avenue.

Since the statue is meant as a gateway art project, the commission has been focused on how to make the bronze more inviting and accessible.

Commission member Keith May presented a rough sketch of the horseshoe-shaped walkway, which would allow pedestrians to view the bronze from the front.

May also included rough estimates of the sidewalk's cost — \$378 for regular concrete, \$756 for a stamped or colored design. Some members wanted to solicit artists from the Umatilla Indian Reservation to create the design.

At the end of the meeting, commission member Susan Plass announced that she would be leaving the commission. She cited her election to a seat on the Blue Mountain Community College Board of Education as the reason for her departure.

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Member FDIC

Howard Johnson comes to Pendleton in franchise swap

By JONATHAN BACH
East Oregonian

Pendleton's hospitality scene is seeing marked changes this summer.

The Travelers Inn at 310 SE Dorion Ave. will reopen as a Knights Inn in July after the former Knights Inn at 105 SE Court Ave. a few blocks away became a Howard Johnson on June 3.

Travelers Inn owner Barry Buehler said he and Howard Johnson owner Surya Das have been in talks about changing franchises since last winter.

For Das, the move comes as a means by which to raise his establishment's profile in town.

"Most Americans know Howard Johnson (better) than Knights Inn," he said.

Instead of charging \$49-\$59 for a room with a single bed, he said he can now charge \$69-\$79.

"In that way, this town generates more revenue," he said.

He said he expects a thirty to 40 percent increase in yearly revenue. He said his hotel made \$350,000 last year.

Das passed the Knights



Staff photo by Jonathan Bach

New Howard Johnson owner Surya Das, 50, checks in (Left) Rhonda Reed and (Right) Kathy Ward, who are in town for family. The Howard Johnson was a Knights Inn until June 3, when Das finalized a move to become part of the international franchise.

Inn name onto Buehler, who said he expects a "moderate" gain in incoming customers from the move, with a 15 to 20 percent increase in revenue.

He said the Travelers Inn used to be a Rodeway Inn, and that he wanted to return to those franchise days.

Das managed a Days Inn and a Ramada in California before becoming a hotel owner in Pendleton.

With recently opened vegetarian Indian restaurant Govinda's Garden

under his purview, too, Das said he does not plan to expand any further for the time being.

He said he does not want to "orphan" the Howard Johnson and enjoys having one-to-one contact with customers.

Buehler, however, said he bought the Sunset Inn at 425 North First St. in Hermiston and plans to turn it into a Knights Inn, too.

Contact Jonathan Bach at jbach@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0809.

Library district hires interim director

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

The Oregon Trail Library District hired a part-time interim director through July 31 during a lengthy meeting Wednesday night in Boardman.

Kathy Street, school librarian at Arlington Community Charter School, will work 20 hours per week for the district after Marsha Richmond leaves the position Tuesday.

Richmond, who has worked for the district 21 years, resigned in April to become Umatilla County Special Library District

coordinator. The OTLD board, however, retained Richmond on a part-time basis through June.

The board voted 3-1 to hire Street from among four candidates. Barb Huwe was the lone vote against, instead favoring Sue Oliver, an Irrigon resident and retired analyst for the Oregon Department of Energy.

In the end, the board opted for someone with library experience. Street holds a master's degree in library science from Emporia State University in Emporia, Kansas.

Meanwhile, the board

agreed to work through the Local Government Training Institute to hire a new full-time director.

In other business, the district is advertising to fill the board seat left open by Alice Ellis' resignation. Board members are elected at-large from the library communities in Boardman, Irrigon and Heppner.

The board also approved its 2015-16 budget and hired a professional accounting firm to handle the district's finances. The district has five employees on payroll, none of whom work more than 40 hours per week.

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