

HERMISTON

City to create public art plan

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Hermiston could see more public art installations like this one after the city council approved creation of a public art plan.

The Hermiston city council affirmed its support for public art on Monday by giving the Community Enhancement Committee a green light on creating a formal public art plan.

The plan would define "public art" and use community feedback to designate areas of the city ripe for an art installation. Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the plan would follow the model set by Ashland, Bend and other similar cities that kept their plan broad.

"They didn't say 'In this area we're going to put a picture of a pink cat,'" he said.

The Community Enhancement Committee plans to apply for a \$4,500 Arts Build Communities grant and provide a 50 percent match to bring on a consultant to gather public feedback and create the plan.

"Myself and the rest of the staff don't have the time or the expertise to develop a public art plan," Morgan said.

Mayor David Drotzmann

reminded the council that developing a public art plan was one of the five mandates the council gave the committee when it was formed. But after the council shot down a landscape ordinance — also originally a mandate from the council — that the committee had spent months developing, Drotzmann said the committee wanted to check with the council before starting work.

"We don't want to waste their time," Drotzmann said.

Councilor John Kirwan said the city needed to be thoughtful in approaching the issue of public art.

"This has been quite controversial in other parts of Umatilla County," he said.

Some additional public art has already been quietly popping up around Hermiston. A stainless steel cattail sculptures surrounded by river rocks was recently added to a section of benches along Highway 395 just south of Nookies.

Parks and Recreation director Larry Fetter told the *East Oregonian* he wanted to do something with the large metal saucer-shaped object that now holds the cattail sculptures.

"It had been there a long time and no one could tell me how it got there and what it was for," he said.

The cattails were created by Chris Huffman, a local artist who also created the horses on the Stanfield overpass, the decorative bike racks in Echo and several other public art installations around the county.

He said he was happy to hear that the city was taking more of an interest in public art.

"I think it's a great idea," he said. "If you can get people to stop and look at art you can get people to stop and spend money."

He said if Hermiston is the biggest city in Eastern Oregon it should look like it.

"I'm glad Hermiston is moving in a direction of revitalizing and beautifying," he said.

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MILTON-FREEWATER

City may allow medical marijuana dispensaries

East Oregonian

Faced with several options, the Milton-Freewater City Council decided to start on the path toward regulating medical marijuana sales.

Milton-Freewater City Manager Linda Hall said that the council made its decision after a lengthy debate at a meeting Monday.

Hall said the council voted twice on the issue.

The first vote was to send an amendment of the city's zoning ordinance to the planning commission that will recognize marijuana dispensaries as a business that can operate in the city.

The second vote triggered a first reading for an ordinance that will change the city's business

license ordinance to include medical marijuana dispensaries and determine how, where and when they will operate.

Hall said the council's discussion did include recreational marijuana sales, but an official decision on that subject probably won't come until early 2016. Under House Bill 3400, a council's ban on marijuana sales after Dec. 24, 2015 must be referred to voters for approval.

Hall said the council's decision did not come without opposition, with both motions approved by a 4-2 vote. Councilors Brad Humbert, Steve Irving, Ed Chesnut and Steven Patten voted for the measures, while Orrin Lyon and Jeff Anliker voted against them.

HERMISTON

City ends transit contract after uninsured injury

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

The city of Hermiston has suspended Hermiston Transit Service's contract for the senior and disabled ride program and assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the city does not intend to renew the contract once the 60 day suspension is up.

The decision caused an outpouring of public comments during Monday night's city council meeting from employees and clients of Hermiston Transit Service.

"It has confused a lot of riders," driver Nancy Gomez said. "Some riders, we can't even explain it to them because they don't have the mental capacity

to understand." Under the senior and disabled ride program, the city provides vouchers to qualifying residents for a \$2 taxi ride. Umatilla Cab Company also has a contract with the city to accept the vouchers.

Barbara Robinson, manager of Hermiston Transit Service, told the city council the suspension took place because the taxi company did not know it was supposed to inform the city that its wheelchair van had broken down.

Morgan contradicted that account, saying the contract was terminated because the taxi service failed to carry commercial liability insurance on a van it used to transport someone who was

using a city voucher and was subsequently injured during the ride.

Other Hermiston Transit Service employees, including Chantel Robinson, said that a driver was transporting a longtime client in his private vehicle as a personal favor to her. Robinson said it was made clear to the client that it was a personal ride and not a business one and that no senior and disabled ride ticket was used for the trip.

Morgan said there was no way to prove whether the client's account or Hermiston Transit Service's account was true because records aren't kept of when and where each ticket is used.

Several Hermiston Transit Service clients said

they didn't want to switch to Umatilla Cab Company because the Robinsons had always gone out of their way to help senior and disabled riders with everything from carrying groceries to helping them up after a fall.

"Why are us clients being punished because they want us to go to another taxi service with people we don't even know?" Jerry Reeves asked.

Mayor David Drotzmann said it was city staff, not the council, that made the decision but he knew that the contract required certain things in order to participate in the ride program.

"When that contract is violated we have a responsibility to protect our constituents," Drotzmann said.

BRIEFLY

Health advisory lifted for Willow Creek Reservoir

HEPPNER — The Oregon Health Authority lifted a health advisory Wednesday issued for Willow Creek Reservoir east of Heppner.

Water monitoring confirmed the level of blue-green algae and associated toxins are below guideline values for human exposure, according to an OHA press release.

Officials, however, advise recreational visitors to be alert for signs of algae bloom in Oregon waters because only a

fraction of Oregon's lakes are monitored by state and federal agencies. People and their pets should avoid contact if the water is foamy, scummy, thick, pea green, blue green or brownish red in color or if a thick mat of blue-green algae is visible in the water.

For local information about Willow Creek Reservoir, contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at 541-506-4807. For health information, to report human or pet illnesses due to blooms or to ask questions, call the OHA at 971-673-0400. For more information about harmful algae blooms, visit healthoregon.org/hab.

EOU to advise transfer students

Students interested in transferring to Eastern Oregon University can attend upcoming advising sessions in Pendleton and Hermiston.

Jacelyn Keys, academic advisor and regional center director, will explain how to transfer credits, how to apply and how to access resources such as financial aid and other enrollment services.

Pendleton: 5-6 p.m. Nov. 4 in room 208 of Morrow Hall at BMCC and from 12-1 p.m. Nov. 9 in room 201 of Morrow Hall.

Hermiston: 5-6 p.m. Nov. 3 in community room 134 at the Eastern Oregon Higher

Education Center and from 12-1 p.m. Nov. 10 in the EOHEC conference room.

Students are encouraged to bring copies of their unofficial transcripts for reference.

For more information, call 541-289-2841.



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Attention Parents of K-4th Graders!

Our Annual Holiday Design Contest Is On!
Designs Due At Local Branches By 11/03/15
Winner Gets \$125 Plus Other Perks!

Holiday Design Contest Winner Last Year:
Mattelynn Moon of Hermiston, OR.




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