

RIVER: Land purchased by city in 2003

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said. “There is shade that’s maintained, but people want to see the water. They want to get down into the water. I have a responsibility as park director to strike a balance.” Gary James, fisheries program manager for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, said he hadn’t heard about the work and couldn’t comment. Jon Staldine, director of the Umatilla Basin Watershed Council, couldn’t be reached Tuesday. Riverfront Park was a ranch, until it was purchased by the city of Hermiston in 2003. It has since become one of the city’s most-used parks, Fetter said. Fetter said the original park design was reviewed by the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and tribes before it was approved. The design included views of the Umatilla River, though Fetter said brush and invasive weeds had since become too thick along riverbank.

“I’m trying to be somewhat faithful to the original plan,” he said. The original park map actually called for a boat launch near the parking lot, which the city never built. Fetter said he’s no longer interested in a boat launch, but figures the park could become a prime place for kayakers, tubers and fishermen to gather. Fetter said he would also like to work with ODFW on future river access from nearby Steelhead Park. He envisions a “water trail” for boaters leading down to the city’s recycled water treatment plant. “People want to reconnect with this natural asset they have in their own back yard,” Fetter said. “There’s limited opportunities to do that in Hermiston.” River health, not recreation, is the priority at the nearby Oxbow property which, too, used to be ranches. The watershed council, ODFW and tribes recently joined to form a team to look at how and where to

rehab riparian habitat. Last year, volunteers planted thousands of native trees in an historic floodplain on Oxbow, which the watershed council said will drain colder, cleaner water back into the river. Fetter said he could potentially see something similar at Riverfront Park, planting willows and dogwood to stabilize the stream bank. Flooding is also an issue at Riverfront, as water at high flows occasionally spills over the bank and into the parking lot. While most of the 100-yard treated area remains scarred by snags and mud, Fetter said he expects grass will regrow by spring. He said he’s only heard positive feedback from residents so far. “Part of the enjoyment of the park is to have a view of the water,” he said. “We want people to enjoy this public facility.” *Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.*

SENIOR CENTER: Building must be used solely for activities for senior citizens for the first five years

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able. The move, he said, was necessary because the land the senior center is on was sold to the school district as part of a deal to build a new fair and rodeo grounds. When a private fundraising effort by the seniors to build a new center came up short, the city stepped in to help obtain the money needed for a new facility After his turn at the microphone, Hawkins took his seat in the back row of the council chambers, but as public testimony continued he repeated to those around him that Drotzmann was a liar. The mayor insisted that Hawkins stop calling him that, and Hawkins insisted it was true. Drotzmann tried to bring the meeting back to order but Hawkins continued his rant and Drotzmann told him to quiet down or leave. Hawkins said he was done listening to the “bombastic” talk from Drotzmann and stood up, continuing to exchange words with the mayor as he left the building. It wasn’t the first time residents involved with the senior center have expressed concerns with the city’s involvement in the project or its plans for future use. The \$2 million Community Development Block Grant the city obtained on behalf of the senior center board requires the building be used solely for activities for senior citizens for the first five years. But after that, the city plans to use parts of the building for classes and other events. In February during a public forum at the senior center, attendees expressed



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The city of Hermiston is planning on building a new senior center in the area behind the Hermiston Public Library and plans to close a section of Northeast Ridgeway. concerns that seniors’ needs were being pushed aside in favor of the city’s vision for a multi-use community center. On Monday Virginia Beebe reiterated some of those points, stating that seniors aren’t interested in a multi-purpose building but just need a comfortable place to socialize and share a meal. She didn’t list any specific issues with the Ridgeway site. Willard Fordice, a member of the senior center who drives the bus for other members, did take issue with the Ridgeway site, saying there was no room for expansion and that parking and access would be difficult downtown. Those concerns are what led the advisory board and council to originally choose the Aspen site on Fourth Street, where the 3.23 acres would have allowed for more expansion and parking than the two acres behind the library. The third choice would be to renovate the former Goodwill building on

Hermiston Avenue. Two members of the senior center advisory committee with ties to downtown spoke in favor of the new site on Ridgeway Avenue. Mary Corp, who owns Kay & Cs Art and Collectibles on Main Street, and Sally Anderson-Hansell, a Hermiston lawyer, agreed that it was the best available option now that the Aspen site had fallen through. They had previously advocated for the Ridgeway site when the council made its initial decision in April, arguing that placing the building downtown, visible from Highway 395, would help revitalize Main Street. At that time they presented the council with a petition from downtown business owners but failed to convince a majority of the council to name the Ridgeway site as their first choice. On Monday the council voted 5-0 in favor of pursuing the Ridgeway site, with Jackie Myers, Lori Davis and Clara Beas Fitzgerald absent.

Gains in Iraqi city vindicate U.S.-led strategy, at high cost

BAGHDAD (AP)—The advance of Iraqi forces into the heart of Ramadi, a restive city that fell to the Islamic State group earlier this year, in some ways vindicated the U.S.-led coalition’s strategy for rolling back the extremists -- but victory has come at a high cost, and the same tactics might not work elsewhere. The battle for Ramadi was waged by the Iraqi military -- rather than Shiite or Kurdish militias -- with elite counterterrorism units advancing under the cover of coalition airstrikes and raising the Iraqi national flag over the main government complex in the provincial capital on Monday. Pockets of resistance remain, but the majority of Ramadi is under government control for the first time since May, when IS militants punched their way into the city with a series of massive suicide car bombs, scattering and humiliating Iraq’s beleaguered security forces. Brig. Gen. Ahmed al-Belawi said “heavy and

concentrated airstrikes” by the U.S.-led coalition killed IS fighters, destroyed their vehicles and blew up suicide car bombs before they could be deployed, allowing his forces to advance into the city. “I think this fight shows the Iraqis are ready to fight and these calls for U.S. ground troops are not the best strategy moving forward,” said Ahmed Ali, a senior fellow at the Institute of Regional and International Studies at the American University of Iraq. “What we saw in terms of the combination of airstrikes and intelligence support and then forces on the ground, it has worked very, very well,” he said. Over the past six months, the coalition has launched more than 600 airstrikes, hitting about 2,500 different targets, U.S. Army Col. Steve Warren, the Baghdad-based spokesman for the coalition, told reporters on Tuesday. He said at its peak there were up to 1,000 IS fighters in Ramadi, and

that only 150-250 remain. But while the airstrikes eventually helped flush out the militants, they smashed large parts of the city into rubble. The city has suffered “huge devastation,” Al-Belawi said. He estimates that more than half of the city’s buildings have been destroyed, including government offices, markets and houses. Most residents fled earlier this year, and it could be months or longer before they are able to return. Even before IS rolled in, Ramadi bore scars from the eight-year U.S. intervention in Iraq. U.S. troops fought their bloodiest battles in Ramadi and nearby Fallujah, which was the first Iraqi city to fall to IS and remains under its control. When IS captured Ramadi earlier this year, the militants blew up the homes of members of the security forces, but even those demolitions did not compare with the destruction wrought by the U.S.-led warplanes, according to al-Belawi.

LEGISLATURE: In 1975, 17 percent of state representatives were age 24-29

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getting representation in Salem. After three terms, Barton announced in August he wouldn’t seek reelection in 2016 so he can spend more time with his family. He and his wife just had their first child. “I do not feel it is fair to my family, my clients or my constituents to juggle so many responsibilities, and my family must come first,” Barton wrote. Young people’s underrepresentation is worse than it was in the 1970s, said Jim Moore, politics professor at Pacific University and

“Millennials will enter politics, just a bit later than the boomers did.”
— **Jim Moore**, politics professor at Pacific University

director of the Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation. In 1975, 17 percent of state representatives were baby boomers, who were then 24-29. There was only one baby boomer in the Senate, Moore said. “Boomers were seeing that young people could cause political change,” he said. The Watergate scandal “showed younger people that they needed to be

involved to prevent the kind of corruption they saw at the national level,” Moore said. “Throw in the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movements, and there were a host of issues that drew younger people into politics.” Millennials also have started families and businesses later than baby boomers did. “Millennials will enter politics, just a bit later than the boomers did,” Moore said.

NEIGHBOR: Family moved to town Christmas weekend

Continued from 1A

took the bar and passed.” She was from St. Helens, so they moved there. He applied for lawyer and law enforcement jobs, including with a federal police agency and the Umatilla County District Attorney’s Office. Hayes’ shaved head and taut jaw give him the look of a lightweight boxer. He said he got into shape to pass the physical fitness requirements for the federal gig. But in June he got a call to interview for a prosecutor position in Pendleton. District Attorney Dan

Primus offered him the job, and he took it. That meant leaving his family and making long trips up and down the Columbia Gorge. But Hayes said his colleagues and coworkers are fine people, and they helped him adjust to life here. And while he missed his family, he said he was able to put in long hours and learn the job, including that courtroom bit he once was not so keen on. That went on for months, until mid-December and the sale of their St. Helens home. It wasn’t until

Christmas weekend that his family moved to Pendleton. Pendleton’s cowboy vibe and Western history feel like a good fit, he said, and he can now get back into that vibe. In Rexburg, he said he would often saddle a horse and go for a ride. And he’s looking forward to fishing, hiking and camping in Eastern Oregon. But Hayes also sounds like he will enjoy spending time relaxing in his newly-full home. “If I can do nothing with my family,” he said, “I’m pretty cool with that.”

BRIEFLY

Chicago officer pleads not guilty to murder charges CHICAGO (AP) — A white Chicago police officer charged with murder in the 2014 fatal shooting of black teenager Laquan McDonald pleaded not guilty Tuesday. Jason Van Dyke is “hanging in there” and wants to tell his side of what happened so he’s not seen “as this cold-blooded killer,” defense attorney Dan Herbert said after the court hearing. Herbert added that they haven’t ruled out asking for a change of venue. The case is in Cook County Criminal Court in Chicago where demonstrators have staged marches protesting the shooting and how it’s been handled. Van Dyke, 37, faces six counts of first-degree murder and one of official misconduct in the death of 17-year-old McDonald. The officer, wearing a dark suit and blue striped tie, appeared in court Tuesday as his lawyer entered the plea on his behalf. Judge Vincent Gaughan set the next hearing for Jan. 29.

2 Cleveland officers still in jeopardy over Tamir Rice case CLEVELAND (AP) — Despite the grand jury decision not to charge a white patrolman in the killing of 12-year-old Tamir Rice, the case is far from over for the city of Cleveland, the officers involved in the shooting, or the black boy’s grief-stricken family. The family is suing the city, federal prosecutors are looking into possible civil rights charges against Timothy Loehmann and his partner, and the two officers face a departmental investigation that could result in disciplinary action, including firing. Tamir was carrying what turned out to be a pellet gun when Loehmann shot and killed the boy within two seconds of emerging from his police cruiser in November 2014. On Monday, prosecutors said a grand jury concluded that Loehmann reasonably believed that it was a real gun and that his life was in danger.

Deadly storm brings Northeast its 1st hit of winter PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Winter weather that spun off a series of deadly storms in the Midwest brought the season’s first big punch to the Northeast on Tuesday, with snow, sleet and freezing rain greasing roads, sending drivers spinning and keeping people indoors amid sub-freezing temperatures. Parts of northern New England already had about 6 inches of snow by early evening, and isolated areas could get 10 inches or more by the time it ends late in the day, according to the National Weather Service. The weather made for a sloppy mess in parts of metro Boston, where memories linger of last winter’s record-breaking snowfall. But as Fernando Gonterman waited for a train from Harvard Square to his job at Massachusetts General Hospital, he was unfazed. “Weather is weather. Just deal with it, right?” he said.

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