

HERMISTON

EOTEC board approves barn designs

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center board approved the design of three livestock barns Friday morning, but voted to put two contracts on hold while it figures out where water for the facility will come from.

The board, which included a newly reappointed Ed Brookshier, gave a green light to three large barns — the swine barn and fur and feathers barn at 15,540 square feet each, and a barn almost three times that size to host horses, cattle, goats and sheep.

On the recommendation of chair Byron Smith, the board also voted to delay awarding a landscaping contract that had previously been put out to bid. The board voted to hold off until it had a better picture of how much water will be available for irrigation and where that water will come from.

Currently the EOTEC site is served by a well, but it is not adequate to water grassy areas across the entire site. Smith said the board is still in talks with various parties about options to gain more water, including

digging more wells or leasing water rights from the Stanfield Irrigation District.

Board member Dan Dorran said landscaping is not critical to the opening of the event center, but he did think it was still important to improve appearances out there.

“I think all of us need to be out there pulling weeds before the grand opening,” he said.

The board also agreed to revise and reissue the request for proposals for a fencing contract after a potential bidder said it was too hard to estimate costs in its current form. The RFP asks for bidders to provide a cost per foot for fencing, but did not describe the total amount of fencing that would be needed or give specifications on things like gates or decorative sections. The bidder said those variables have a significant effect on cost per foot.

On Friday the board also approved \$1,200 for Eastern Oregon Telecom to bring fiber optic service to EOTEC, plus a \$199 a month payment for Internet and \$116 a month for phone service throughout the site.

Board member Vijay Patel said in his experience in hotel manage-

ment the monthly costs were “very reasonable.”

The board approved going forward with a programmable electronic card key lock system on the front door and kitchen door of the event center, placing a transformer to bring electricity to the sewer lift station, planning a grand opening of the event center for the last week in April and reimbursing Barton Laser Leveling an additional \$76,567 for services rendered during their work on the project.

Dennis Barnett, chair of the fund-raising committee, said donations have passed the \$1.5 million mark.

During the public comment portion of the meeting BoBo McMillan, who puts on the Sand Cup Futurity and other barrel racing and equestrian events at the TRAC Center in Pasco, said she was looking forward to the opening of EOTEC and was happy to serve on an advisory board or help in any way needed with making connections in the equestrian community.

McMillan said the TRAC Center is planning to replace the dirt floor in its indoor arena with concrete and asking equine events to truck in their own dirt. If that happens, she said, she would be looking for a new venue

for some of her events and she knew other events who would be doing the same.

TRAC Center manager Tom French told the *East Oregonian* that the move to concrete had been discussed, but there were no official plans and nothing had been formally announced.

McMillan encouraged the EOTEC board to consider adding an indoor arena (which the board has included in its plans for future phases of construction) sooner rather than later.

Smith said the board was aware of the need and would love to have an indoor arena as well, but simply didn't have the funds to include it in the first phase of construction.

Meetings of the EOTEC board are getting longer and more frequent as contracts connected with the project multiply. The board plans to meet twice a month, instead of once a month, starting in March. Meetings will generally be the second and fourth Friday of the month at 7 a.m. at the Stafford Hansell Government Center.

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

BRIEFLY

Construction to cause Hwy 395 lane closures

HERMISTON — Traffic around Jennie Avenue in Hermiston will be affected the week of Feb. 29 due to the Oregon Department of Transportation's ongoing \$3.7 million construction project on Highway 395.

On Monday the west lane of Jennie Avenue will be closed during the day. From 7 p.m. Tuesday night to 10 a.m. Wednesday morning, lanes will be closed on Jennie Avenue and Highway 395 to dig conduit trenching.

Crews will also continue to work on the intersection Tuesday through Thursday during daylight hours, with minimal traffic impacts.

Monday through Thursday from 6 p.m. to 10 a.m. lanes on assorted sections of Highway 395 between Southeast Fourth Street and Theater Lane will be closed while crews work to update pedestrian ramps to ADA standards.

Officer lays down motorcycle to avoid crash

PENDLETON — Pendleton police officer John “J.D.” Lambert suffered a leg injury when he laid down his motorcycle Thursday to avoid a crash with a car.

Lambert, 32, was off duty and riding a black Suzuki motorcycle at about 7:30 p.m. down Southwest Hailey Avenue, according to Oregon State Police, and saw a vehicle waiting to pull out from the nearby Sinclair service station at 701 Southgate. Lambert slowed, then saw another vehicle coming toward him from Burger King, 601 Southgate.

The driver of that vehicle, however, did not signal and turned left toward the gas station in front of Lambert.

He tried to brake, state police reported, but had to lay the motorcycle on its left side. The machine and Lambert slid more than 25 feet on the street.

The bike pinned Lambert's left foot. People rushed from the service station and helped him lift the bike and get free. An ambulance took him to St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, and a friend drove the Suzuki home.

Hospital spokesman Larry Blanc said Lambert was treated and released. Pendleton police Cpl. Tyler Reddington said Lambert's injuries were minor, but he would miss at least a few days of work.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to news@eastoregonian.com

HERMISTON

A few checkmates away from state competition

By **JENNIFER COLTON**
East Oregonian

Students will struggle for strategic mastery over their competition Saturday in the regional “Chess For Success Tournament” at Hermiston High School.

The competition begins at 9 a.m. and will include more than 30 students from Umatilla and Morrow counties. Students will compete in elementary, middle school and high school divisions. The top teams and individuals will move on to the state competition April 8-9 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland.

Hermiston High School has had a chess club — off and on — for decades. The school joined Chess For Success soon after its creation in 1996. At both the regional and state tournaments, all chess players are guaranteed five matches, win or lose.

“That’s an especially good part to the tournaments,” said Hermiston coach Delia Wallis. “The kids get a full day of competition, with varied experiences.”

This year, Hermiston has eight high school students competing, a record for recent years. Friday, half



Staff Photo by Jennifer Colton

Freshman Bobby Bellinger contemplates his next move during the Chess Club practice Friday at Hermiston High School. The Chess Club is hosting the regional competition at Hermiston High.

the team gathered for a last-minute practice session.

“It’s a strategic and mental challenge — and it’s fun,” said Joshua Hinkley, a sophomore.

Bobby Bellinger, a freshman, has played chess for seven years.

“My parents taught me, and I’ve just kept going from that,” he said.

“I love the strategy and the tension. There’s a lot more to it than meets the eye.”

When they aren’t playing chess, Hermiston’s players tackle sports, band, science club, work and other strategy games like the board game Risk or the card game Magic: The Gathering. The chess club meets

once a week and plays in their free time as well.

Middle school students will compete from Armand Larive Middle school, Sandstone Middle School and Heppner Elementary. The division is open to students in sixth through eighth grades.

In the elementary division, all students competing will travel from Heppner, where MaryAnn Elqueabal has a team of 10 students in first through fifth grade. Hermiston does not have any elementary students in the competition.

“It’s not so much the kids — whether they’re interested — it’s finding the adults willing to donate their time to play with the kids,” Wallis said. “I’m so proud of the program’s growth, and I’m anxious to see it continue growing K-12.”

To work with community interaction, the chess club will be hosting community events on April 1 and April 5. Community members will be invited to play chess with the students or among themselves after school on those days.

Contact Jennifer Colton at jcolton@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4534

Department of revenue lists most delinquent taxpayers

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

The Oregon Department of Revenue is trying a new tactic to collect delinquent taxes: publishing the names of the 50 individuals and 50 businesses that owe the state the most money.

Together the 100 individuals and businesses owe more than \$43 million.

The biggest bill for a corporation comes from Courtesy Staffing of Boardman. The temp agency — which appears to no longer be in business — owes the state \$509,457 in back taxes.

Phone numbers listed online for the business, and its affiliate in Rancho Cucamonga, California, are no longer in service or are no longer connected to the business. According to the Secretary of State’s business registry, the company dissolved in 2014 after registering with the state in 2011.

One of the top delinquent individuals listed on the Department of Revenue’s website is Hermiston resident Donna K. Anderson. She comes in at number 42 with \$335,385 owed, according to the department’s list. A message left for her on Thursday was not returned by Friday afternoon.

Anderson and Courtesy Staffing are the only Morrow County or Umatilla County addresses on the list, which can be accessed in full at www.oregon.gov/DOR/Pages/delinquent.

According to a Department of Revenue press release, the list reflects the amount of active tax warrants, which do not include recent payments made or interest owed.

Chris Wytoski, collections manager for the Personal Tax and Compliance Division, said in a news release that the public list is a pilot project of a “new tool” to encourage tax compliance.

“More than 30 states use public posting of delinquent taxpayer information, with positive results,” he said.

Wytoski said inclusion in the list is a last resort after the state has tried repeatedly to collect the taxes. The top delinquent taxpayers were also given a warning and final opportunity to pay up to avoid having their name published.

“We tried to resolve these debts with the taxpayers using other collection

methods, but they haven’t paid,” Wytoski said.

The names, addresses and tax amounts listed on the Department of Revenue website are already public record on tax warrants. The department is just putting the information all in one place and calling attention to it. Wytoski said the department will still safeguard taxpayers’ other personal information.

The department does not post information about delinquent taxpayers who have entered into a payment plan and are making all scheduled payments, who have filed for bankruptcy, who have an open appeal on the debt, or are in a situation where the state has suspended action

on collection. Names will be deleted from the list within 10 days of full payment.

According to reporting by Forbes magazine, 8.7 percent of United States residents were behind on their taxes in 2014, owing billions of dollars.

Oregon residents or businesses who fall behind on their taxes can make arrangements with the state for a payment plan with interest. In some cases they may qualify for a “temporary uncollectable status” if they can prove that they can’t pay at the moment but will be able to in the future due to a pending contract payment or other means.

If delinquent taxpayers meet other criteria, including

being over age 60 or receiving disability benefits, they may also be eligible to settle with the state for a lower amount than what they owe.

If residents ignore repeated notices from the state to set up a payment plan, however, the Department of Revenue can garnish their wages, place a lien on their property or seize real estate that is not the taxpayer’s primary residence.

Taxpayers are allowed to appeal their tax bill if they contact the department within 30 days of receiving a notice from the state.

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

Tim & Annette Terraberry's
Dinner & Auction

Sunday, March 13th 4:00pm
Hermiston High School Commons



Tim is battling Cancer, so please help support this wonderful couple.

Doors open 4pm • Tri Tip dinner buffet 5pm
Silent Auction • Tickets \$35

Tickets may be purchased at the Hermiston Chamber, American West Properties and Oasis Vineyard Church. A table for 8 can be purchased for \$280.

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer, please call or text Nancy Walchli at 541-571-1723.

Diabetes Education Series
Diabetes Self Management Series

March 3rd, 10th, 17th & 24th
9:30 AM to 11:30AM
Advance Registration Required
Most Major Insurances, Medicare, Medicaid
For more information or to register 541-278-3249



Melissa Naff, RD, LD, CDE
Diabetes Educator • 541-278-3249



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