

EOTEC: Should have bids for barn construction by mid-June

Continued from 1A

the current fair and rodeo grounds to Hermiston School District in 2012, but Hermiston is a “can-do community” that has made it work.

State senator Bill Hansell, who was a Umatilla County commissioner when the county first decided it wanted to move the fair from the center of Hermiston, said the \$8 million that eventually came from the state was helped along by the fact that Hermiston was a “visionary community” and the Umatilla County Fair is one of the best county fairs in the state.

As community members cheered the opening of the event center, city manager and EOTEC chair Byron Smith said he hoped the open house was the first in a series of celebrations as the EOTEC project continues to move toward hosting the 2017 Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo.

So what now?

The building that opened Friday is just one component of the overall EOTEC project. When complete, EOTEC will also feature three large barns, a rodeo arena, food stalls, RV parking and extensive green space — all yet to be built.

According to Rob Drier of Frew Development Group, the EOTEC board should have bids in hand for construction of the barns by mid-June. He told the EOTEC board during their Friday morning business meeting there have already been contractors who expressed an interest in the project.

A swine barn and “fur and feathers” barn will run about 15,500 square feet each and a third barn almost three times that size will host horses and cattle.

Rodeo arena

The rodeo arena is still under design, and Drier said it will probably be another three weeks before bid documents are complete. He said the bid package will include various add-on options that the board can price out for before deciding whether there is money in the budget.

The original design work was done by local designer Jim Michaels. But in March, Drier asked the board to hire a second architectural firm to help finish the



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Visitors to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center both coming and going during an open house Friday in Hermiston.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hermiston Mayor Dave Drotzmann speaks during an open house for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center on Friday in Hermiston.

drawings to the standard needed. Since October, the board had been told that the drawings would be finished in February.

George Anderson, a Hermiston attorney who has provided pro bono legal services to EOTEC, expressed frustration with the continued delays, saying during Friday’s meeting that as a private citizen he was “mystified” that it had taken so many months to complete designs for the barns and

the rodeo arena.

“You’ve got contractors here, you need to light a fire under them,” he said.

Smith said he understood the frustration, but there were a lot of factors at play.

“We’re trying to make this happen, but this is not a straight-forward one-group project,” he said. “It’s a community project that requires a lot of input from different groups, and that has

More photos online



Group to work faster.

Odds & ends

Various smaller bid packages will also need to be completed in time for the 2017 Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo. Food stalls, restrooms, fencing, site lighting, a public address system, signs and landscaping are still in the works.

Some items have not been put out to bid yet, and others are being done in pieces. A request for proposals for signs for the site, for example, did not receive any bids and so the board is buying different types of signs from various vendors instead.

The fencing bid was issued but then canceled after contractors complained it was too hard to give a price per foot when they didn’t know how much fencing or what types of fencing was needed. The board now plans to issue a request

for proposals for the 1.25 miles of chain link fence needed to finish enclosing the entire EOTEC grounds, then add decorative and interior fencing later.

Water rights

Water continues to be a challenge for EOTEC. A single shallow well is currently providing the site’s water, but it won’t be enough for irrigation once all of the planned green space is seeded.

Smith told the *East Oregonian* that a second well would be dug soon. He said a nearby company has expressed an interest in selling deep water rights to EOTEC, but he is still working with them to overcome legal hurdles. If those hurdles prove too much, Smith said a second option would involve switching the property from the Stanfield Irrigation District to the Hermiston Irrigation District and using some of their water.

“We haven’t closed the door on that,” he said.

Operations

Until the full EOTEC project is up and running, pulling in revenue from facility rentals while also adding up costs, questions about EOTEC’s operations budget continue to be mostly answered with: “We don’t know yet.”

Umatilla County and the city of Hermiston plan to split evenly any subsidy needed for operating costs. They contributed \$25,000 each during the current fiscal year but expect to need a bigger contribution as the project opens for business.

The operating budget includes a salary for business manager Heather Cannell, who is running day-to-day operations such as booking events. On Friday the board agreed that since the event center building is open, they will need to have some sort of receptionist to greet visitors and answer phones when Cannell is not on site.

Even though work still needs to be completed on the rest of EOTEC, the event center will start hosting events immediately. Cannell said bookings so far include seven private events and a variety of meetings, including a League of Oregon Cities gathering scheduled for Wednesday.

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BRIEFLY

Anti-counterfeiting group suspends Alibaba

SHANGHAI (AP) — An anti-counterfeiting group said Friday it was suspending Alibaba’s membership following an uproar by some companies that view the Chinese e-commerce giant as the world’s largest marketplace for fakes.

The International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition told members that it had failed to inform the board of directors about conflicts of interest involving the group’s president, Robert Barchiesi.

Earlier Friday, The Associated Press reported that Barchiesi had stock in Alibaba, had close ties to an Alibaba executive and had used family members to help run the coalition.

The coalition, in a letter to members sent after the AP report came out, said conflicts weren’t disclosed to the board “because of a weakness in our corporate governance procedures.” It said the failure was not because of “inaction on Bob’s part,” referring to Barchiesi.

The coalition said that it is hiring an independent firm to review its corporate governance policies.

In its letter, the board said that as a result of members’ concerns, it was suspending a new class of membership under which Alibaba had recently joined. The move would affect two other companies that signed up under the new rules.

Jennifer Kuperman, Alibaba’s head of international corporate affairs, said companies like Alibaba were important for solving the problem of counterfeiting.

At issue is the independence of a small but influential coalition that lobbies U.S. officials and testifies before Congress.

Alibaba’s membership could help shape the global fight against counterfeits. Fakes damage

companies’ bottom lines, can harm consumers who unknowingly buy such products, and feed a vast underground money-laundering industry that supports criminal syndicates.

US officials: Venezuelan president’s hold on power weakening

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. intelligence analysts are increasingly convinced that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro is likely to be pushed aside by members of his own socialist movement before finishing his term.

Senior American intelligence officials said Friday that as Venezuela’s economy spins out of control, Maduro’s grip on power is more fragile. They briefed reporters on condition of anonymity because they weren’t authorized to discuss their

assessments by name.

Since December, when the opposition won legislative elections by a landslide, the country has been wracked by growing political confrontation at a time of triple-digit inflation, widespread food shortages and almost daily hours-long blackouts across much of the nation.

On Friday, Maduro decreed a “state of exception and economic emergency” giving him expanded powers to deal with the economic crisis.

In such a combustible environment, the circumstances under which Maduro could be forced to leave office before his six-year term ends in 2019 are varied, according to the officials. One described it as being able to hear the ice cracking without knowing where the floor will collapse.

But the analysis, based on intelligence they did not share, points to a period of potentially violent



Bid request for decked logs removed from OR Highway 245 in Baker County

The Oregon Department of Transportation is accepting bids for fire-killed, processed, and decked ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir timber in Baker County. Log decks are located on USFS property, on the west side of OR245, off USFS Road 11 approximately 0.3 mile from its junction with OR 245 at approximately milepost 29. **Both ODOT and USFS-owned logs are present on the site. ODOT-owned logs are located on the east end and are marked with a spot of yellow paint.**

Bids are being accepted for ODOT-owned logs.

Tree removal operations are currently active and log decking will be completed May 15. This timber sale will be made on a lump sum basis. A \$5,000.00 bid deposit will be required to be submitted with the bid.

Bid packages will be available AFTER MAY 15.

Bids are due MAY 25. Logs may not be exported.

For more information, or to request a bid packet (available after May 15), call ODOT Forester at 503-508-1346



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