

HERMISTON

# Passing on the baton

## Dunsmoor to step down as band director

By JENNIFER COLTON  
East Oregonian

For four years, Paul Dunsmoor has conducted the Hermiston band program through concerts, parades, football games, state competitions and one big trip to the Holiday Bowl in San Diego.

Next month, the director of bands will turn over his baton.

Dunsmoor's wife, Elizabeth, has been accepted to a graduate program in marine renewable energy at Plymouth University in England. Dunsmoor hopes to take a position in music in the area and continue his career and studies. After Elizabeth's graduation, the couple will relocate based on her career path — and Hermiston, unfortunately, is inland.

Sean McClanahan, current band teacher in the Kiona Benton City School District, has been named Dunsmoor's replacement. Dunsmoor said he will miss spending time with his students but sees a positive future for the band.

"The kids have really taken on the attitude that they are what makes the band great and they are going to do what they can to help the new director. That is huge," Dunsmoor said. "I think the band program is going to continue to grow. I truly believe that this is one of the best high schools in the state."

When Dunsmoor took over the program four years ago, the bands were struggling with attendance, low morale



Hermiston High School music teacher Paul Dunsmoor directs the Hermiston High School band during the district wide music concert in February 2014 in Hermiston.



Sean McClanahan will be the next Hermiston School District band director.

and scheduling conflicts. Since then, Dunsmoor has worked with administration to reschedule classes allowing for, among other things, students to take both choir and band without conflicts. Dunsmoor has grown the marching band almost 50 percent to 140 students and

has expanded the program to include three large band ensembles: concert band, symphonic band and wind ensemble, in addition to jazz band and percussion groups.

Both the percussion ensemble and the wind ensemble have competed at state, and in December the marching band traveled to San Diego and took the field at the National University Holiday Bowl — the first major trip for the band since 1994. The band returned home from that trip with every possible award in their division: overall grand prize, best music, best percussion, best color guard, best marching, best drum major and best general effect.

"When I got here, it was a transition, trying to raise the morale of the kids and bring up our numbers," Dunsmoor said. "I feel like the kids are happy."

The positive changes have

earned Dunsmoor love and respect from his students. Earlier this year, a former student nominated him for an "Inspirational Teacher Award" from Eastern Oregon University. Dunsmoor will conduct his last two concerts with Hermiston High School over the next few weeks. The spring concert for the percussion and jazz band will be at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 19, and the spring concert for the wind ensemble and concert band will be 7 p.m. June 1.

Following the concert, June 7 will be Dunsmoor's last day as a teacher. He will turn over practices and summer events to McClanahan.

"If I make it through without any tears, I'll be impressed," he said. "I'm going to try."

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HERMISTON

# New fire district means less tax revenue for city

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

Voters' decision to approve a merger between Hermiston and Stanfield fire districts will mean increased fire and ambulance service in the new district, but it will also mean sacrifices for the city of Hermiston.

The new Umatilla County Fire District 1 will raise revenue from a property tax rate of \$1.75 per \$1,000 of assessed value, an increase from the \$1.20 per \$1,000 that has been funding Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services.

As promised, voters in Hermiston will not see an increase in their taxes. That's because in 1990 Oregon voters passed Measure 5, which limited the amount of property taxes a resident can pay to \$5 per \$1,000 of assessed value for education and \$10 per \$1,000 for other government services.

Once a city reaches the \$10 ceiling, as Hermiston has, any new tax passed by voters adds a new slice to an already-full pie, shrinking all of the other slices of pie to make room. The process is known as compression.

In Hermiston, the city itself has by far the biggest slice of pie, at a tax rate of more than \$6 per \$1,000 of assessed value. That money pays for city departments ranging from Hermiston Police Department to parks and recreation.

Mark Morgan, the assistant city manager, said in an email that the new tax rate for Umatilla County Fire District will divert approximately \$130,000 per year that would have otherwise gone to the city's general

fund. So while residents won't be paying for the new fire district directly out of their own pockets, the city will have to figure out somewhere to make cuts.

"In short, there's no such thing as a free lunch," Morgan said.

That doesn't mean that the city was against the merger, however. Recognizing the importance of fire and ambulance service to the community's safety and livability, the city council made an official statement in support of a consolidated district in 2015. That attempt to merge the districts failed, but voters approved a second go-round Tuesday.

The other taxing districts within Hermiston affected by compression are Umatilla County, the Port of Umatilla, the county radio district, the mosquito control district and the cemetery district.

Stanfield, which is not under Measure 5 compression limits, will see a 31 cent decrease in property taxes with the new district compared to the previous Stanfield Fire District rate. Residents outside of Hermiston and Stanfield will see up to a 55 cent increase.

The increased taxing rate and new fire district will mean increased fire and ambulance coverage for the Hermiston/Stanfield area, which has been experiencing delays in service multiple times per month when people have called for an ambulance but one has not been immediately available.

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## Umatilla Co. approves law enforcement upgrades

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

Umatilla County's Community Justice Department, jail and dispatch all received the go-ahead Wednesday to purchase of thousands of dollars in equipment upgrades.

The county board of commissioners heard requests Wednesday morning from each department. Community justice sought five transdermal alcohol detectors for \$17,000 to monitor participants in the county's drug court or people serving sentences for driving drunk.

Tammy Sundin, the department's officer manager, told the board smartphones can track the devices. She said the department has been upgrading its monitoring equipment and this would continue that work.

Jail commander Capt. Stewart Harp was back before the commissioners to seek approval for a \$22,917 electronic fingerprint machine for the jail. The board already approved \$20,477 for a previous request, but Harp said the company no longer has that model. But it can provide the more expensive option immediately, though

there is a possibility the cheaper option may still come available.

Commissioner Larry Givens said he did not want the county to get suckered on the deal. County attorney Doug Olsen advised that approving the request now ensures the county gets the equipment. County computer technology expert Riley Wortman said the old fingerprint machine is from 2003 and becoming obsolete.

The third request also was to replace outdated equipment. The sheriff's office dispatch center needs new computer servers for a total of \$56,600. Workman

said the current servers are working but past their useful life.

Dispatch commander Capt. Kathy Lieuallen said the next upgrade would be in six more years. She did not want to push beyond that, she said, because of changes in technology.

The money for the upgrade is already in the budget. Commissioner Bill Elfering said the new funding formula that dispatch users agreed to also ensures money will be there for future improvements.

The board of commissioners passed all three requests 3-0.

## Transportation committee coming to Eastern Oregon

East Oregonian

The state legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization will be able to see some of Eastern Oregon's transportation needs firsthand when it holds one of its meetings in Hermiston this summer.

The committee is tasked with developing a comprehensive package of bills for the 2017 legislative session that will address transportation infrastructure needs — including highways, railways, bridges and ports — across Oregon.

The committee has announced nine meetings for the summer, including one at Hermiston High School on June 29 at 2 p.m. Citizens are welcome to attend and share their

priorities for state investment in transportation. The committee's visit also will include a tour of the Port of Morrow.

Rep. Greg Smith (R-Hepner) is on the 14-person committee and worked to bring the committee to District 57 for one of its meetings. In a statement he thanked House leadership for allowing the committee to travel to Eastern Oregon to hear directly from local communities and ports.

"Our region relies on the transportation system to connect communities and export our commodities," he said. "I believe having the committee travel outside of Salem is the right decision. This will help develop a more robust and comprehensive package that will benefit all of Oregon."

Other meetings will be held in Salem (May 25), Portland (June 13), Ontario (June 28), Eugene (July 20), Bend (August 18), Newport (Sept. 15) and Hillsboro (Sept. 19).

"We want to hear from Oregonians about their transportation priorities," Sen. Lee Beyer (D-Springfield) said in a news release.

"This tour will give us the chance to discuss shipping routes with business owners, traffic flow with community leaders; and congestion with commuters. It will provide the information we need to create the right statewide transportation for all of Oregon."

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