

EOTEC: Rodeo arena must be completed by July 21, 2017

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contractor.

On Friday, however, Frew said that further meetings with stakeholders and a promising pre-bid meeting had persuaded him that the rodeo arena should be carved out from that role, allowing the bid process for a general arena contractor to continue. He said six contractors showed up to the meeting and allowing one of them to get started on work as soon as the bid is awarded July 29 would be just as fast as having Frew Development Group put together its own team of subcontractors.

He said it has been made clear to bidders that the arena needs to be completed by July 21, 2017 at a cost of \$3.8 million.

"\$3.8 million is the budget, and if contractors out there feel they can't do it then they're wasting their time," he said.

On Friday the board also voted to reject the two bids for the barns after neglecting to do so last

week. Both bids came in more than \$1 million over the \$2.6 million the EOTEC authority has available, necessitating changes to the design. Frew said part of the problem was that the construction industry was "very, very busy" in Eastern Oregon right now.

During the public comment section Richard Meisner, who lives on Ott Road near EOTEC, said that events held at the event center building since it opened in May have frequently violated the city's noise ordinance, running until as late as 1 a.m. He also complained about a delay in getting dust suppressant laid down on Ott Road, and about traffic after the events heading east instead of going back up Airport Road to Highway 395 as was intended.

Byron Smith, the EOTEC board chair and Hermiston city manager, said the city would investigate the noise ordinance issue.

The board's next meeting will be July 15.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Brett Wegner Jr. installs batteries into a toy car for his little brother Elliot on Wednesday in Pendleton.

ELLIOT: Speech delay not uncommon in babies born so early

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had all been born before 37 weeks. A third child, Craig, died at 4 1/2 months of SIDS. Removing Elliot from life support was out of the question for Sebrina and her husband Brett.

Elliot was in the hospital for four months. The family spent Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's in Portland. When Sebrina and Brett finally brought their baby boy home, he was on oxygen and a heart monitor.

Almost eight years later, Elliot has come a long way. Now longer the size of an ear of corn, he'll be entering second grade at Sunset Elementary in Pendleton and has a support team in place to help him succeed.

His mom describes him as energetic, happy and lovable.

"He's all boy. He likes dirt, frogs and mud."

He loves Legos, dirt bikes, forklifts — practically anything on wheels — and his family. He's especially fond of his grandma, Shirley

Sagrero of Pendleton, whom he likes to call "Grandpa" just to tease her.

Elliot does have a speech delay, which is not uncommon in babies born so early, according to the U.S. Health and Medicine Division. He still has fluid on his brain, which doctors have told his parents can affect his balance. But his brother, Brett Jr., said Elliot is strong and has an "iron grip."

The family looks back on Elliot's first months of life with an appreciation for the support they received from family, friends, the hospital staff, and the people at Ronald McDonald House. The family is still friends with some of the people they met at their home away from home.

"They were like a second family to us," recalls Brett Jr., who was a teenager at the time.

The Wegners consider Elliot's life a miracle and are hopeful for his future.

"He's strong," Sebrina said. "So I can see good things for him."

TRANSPORTATION: Stanfield wants to improve Main Street

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Orchard Avenue next to the police station and fire department. During Wednesday's hearing, Mayor Dave Drotzmann showed legislators a picture of traffic backed up at the intersection, creating their own made-up turn lane and blocking where a fire truck or ambulance would need to pass to respond to an emergency.

The plan would take \$7 million to complete, and Drotzmann said it was just one of \$43 million worth of needed road projects to keep up with Hermiston's growth.

"We can't fund it without your help and support," he said. "If we were going to go out and try to fund these projects on our own, it would take 143 years."

The city of Stanfield would like to change the feel of its Main Street — which also happens to be Highway 395 — by planting trees, adding medians and creating bulb-outs where there used to be parking.

City manager Blair Larsen told the committee that the lanes of travel would be just as wide as before, but the visual cues to the driver would help prompt people to slow down and look for pedestrians. He said he watched recently as a speeding car passed an elderly woman inside a crosswalk so close by that it knocked the cane out of her hand. Some people refuse to cross the highway on foot at all, he said.

"The economic impact of having a real, walkable Main Street would be huge," he said.

The North Highway 395 committee, made up of business owners and residents between

Hermiston's urban growth boundary and Umatilla's, would like to see a traffic signal added to Baggett Lane and the road improved. The project would create a safer route for trucks from Villareal Trucking, Medelez Trucking, Reddaway Trucking, Sanitary Disposal and other companies to enter and exit the highway.

"They're going to mandate that employees use that route to get on and off 395," committee member Steve Watkins said. "And they're going to want to use it, because right now it's so dangerous to get on and off."

Jerry Imsland, a real estate broker and state appraiser in Pendleton, would like to see access from Interstate 84 to about 100 acres of property near exit 210. Currently the only access is a "little tiny street" called Kirk Extension, which does not meet state standards or reach all of the parcels.

"Here we have no access to 100-and-some acres that has frontage on the highway, and we can't get to it," he said, noting a general shortage of privately owned, develop-able commercial property in Pendleton.

Real estate broker Patty Glaze said she worked with Costco for more than a year before they ultimately decided not to locate in Pendleton. She said the property in question was one of their top choices until it was clear that the access problem would not be easily solved.

The Oregon Department of Transportation would like to move the Umatilla Port of Entry, where semi-trucks pull off to be weighed after crossing into Oregon, from

Umatilla to a spot on I-82 just south of the Umatilla River. The project, which would cost an estimated \$20 million, would allow trucks to continue on the interstate instead of pulling in and out of heavy traffic in Umatilla, which would reduce congestion around the interchange.

Craig Sipp, ODOT Region 5 manager, also told legislators during their tour that ODOT also wanted to improve safety conditions on Cabbage Hill, using tactics that include more chain-up areas, increased lighting and variable speed limits that adjust to the weather conditions.

The Columbia Development Authority would like to see a re-design of the interchange where vehicles can access the Umatilla Chemical Depot from I-82. The steep S-curve into the depot was designed to slow vehicles down for security reasons, but will not be ideal once the Army turns over the land to the local authority for industrial use.

Anderson Perry & Associates, an engineering firm out of La Grande that acts as city engineer for several local cities, would like to see money in the transportation package made available for general road maintenance. Andy Perry told the legislative committee that the work his firm does with municipalities shows the cost savings in keeping up with maintenance before roads deteriorate too far.

"It isn't a linear cost, it's exponential, and the longer we wait, the more it will cost," he said.

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HOUSING: Home sales through June already eclipse 2015 total

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and is set to exceed the city's pre-recession peak in 2007.

Housing prices are also up, averaging \$163,798 per house and closing the gap between Pendleton and Hermiston.

Even with the gains in the current sales market, Sabino estimates Pendleton has room for 90 entry and mid-level houses priced up to \$210,000 with support for high-end housing up to \$330,000.

The study spotlights Pendleton Heights and the 12-unit addition to Village Apartments as developments that helped ease a tight rental market.

The study notes that it's difficult to quantify Pendleton's rental vacancy rate since only 30 percent of the city's renters live in buildings with five or more apartments, which tend to lack on-site management. The vacancy rate should be comparable

to Benton and Walla Walla counties in Washington, which have averaged 3.8 percent vacancy over the past two years.

The study also refutes an argument by some area landlords that Pendleton suffers more from a lack of jobs rather than a lack of inventory, adding that the owners of five, large, market-rate apartment complexes reported full occupancy.

Whether they're for

sale or rentals, high-end or government subsidized, Pendleton's housing issues revolve around quality as much as they do quantity.

Of the properties listed for sale in mid-June, 1960 was the median year the house was built and only 11 available houses were built after 2000.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

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4TH OF JULY

Need more information? Contact the Boardman Chamber at 481-3014 or stop by the Chamber office, 101 Olson Road inside the SAGE Center. You can also call Emily at (940) 781-0338.

Glow 5K Run / Walk
 Sunday evening, July 3 at 8:30 p.m.
 Registration starts at 7:30 p.m.
 Zumba warm-up provided before event by 1 Hr. Cardio Crush
 \$25 with shirt, \$15 without a shirt.
 \$30 family rate without shirts. Shirts are \$10.

July 4th Parade
 Monday, July 4 at 11 a.m.
 Lineup begins at 10 a.m. on NE Front Street
 Prizes for Mayor's Award, Best of Show, and Most Patriotic!

Vendors Welcome!
 If you are interested in being a vendor, call now as space is limited!

July 4th Buttons Return!
 \$3 each or 4/\$10. One lucky button holder will win \$100!
 Get yours at The Chamber or buy one at the Marina Park on July 4th!

Activities on the 4th
 7 to 10 a.m. Scout Breakfast at the Marina Park
 11 a.m. Parade
 After the parade horseshoe, soccer, and 3-on-3 basketball tournaments begin!
 Starting at 5 p.m. Kids' games, vendors, and entertainment at the Marina Park
FIREWORKS at dusk!

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