



Contributed photo by City of Hermiston

Mayor David Drotzmann, left, and Portland Commissioner Dan Saltzman squared off Friday in a watermelon seed-spitting contest in Portland before Hermiston gave away 6,000 pounds of watermelons.

Hermiston gives away 6K pounds of watermelons in Portland

Yearly tradition started in 1980s

East Oregonian

Hermiston officials showed Portlanders that life is sweet in Eastern Oregon on Friday with a giveaway of more than 6,000 pounds of Hermiston watermelons.

Mayor David Drotzmann, City Manager Byron Smith, members of the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce and a delegation of city councilors and staff arrived at Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland on Friday and handed out free melons to eager Portland residents as part of an annual tradition to promote Hermiston agriculture.

The tradition was started in the 1980s by then-mayor Frank Harkenrider, who took a pickup truck full of Hermiston watermelons to Portland and challenged

then-mayor Bud Clark to a seed-spitting contest. The tradition petered out in 2007 but was revived in 2015.

Produce was donated by local growers. Last year Hermiston also gave away potatoes, but assistant city manager Mark Morgan said that the other options weren't nearly as popular as the watermelon so this year they just stuck with the city's famous fruit.

Hermiston won the seed-spitting contest last year and again this year, with city councilor Doug Primmer's winning effort of 29 feet.

The event is designed to foster better relations between the city of Hermiston and the city of Portland, according to a news release from the city.

"We're really happy we can continue this great event, and continue to build on our relationship with our partners in Portland," Drotzmann said.

S. Korea resumes buying U.S. wheat

By MATTHEW WEAVER
EO Media Group

South Korea has resumed normal purchases of U.S. wheat now that it has a test in place that can detect genetically engineered wheat, U.S. Wheat Associates says.

The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is investigating 22 genetically engineered wheat plants found June 14 in a Washington state field. The wheat is MON 71700, developed by Monsanto and used in trials from 1998 to 2001 but never commercialized.

A farmer noticed the wheat after the field was sprayed with glyphosate. MON 71700 wheat is resistant to the herbicide.

South Korea was holding U.S. wheat from mills until the test, developed by Monsanto and validated by USDA, could be put in place.

The country will continue testing U.S. wheat, as it has since 2013, when a different Monsanto variety was found in an Eastern Oregon field. The new test can detect both GE varieties.

"We are very pleased that the test was available so quickly and that (the South Korea Ministry of Food and Drug Safety) deployed the test within just a few days to assure U.S. wheat remains safe and reliable," said Steve Mercer, vice president of communications for U.S. Wheat. "Customers in Korea may resume milling and purchasing U.S. wheat with little or no disruption, as expected."

APHIS says there is no evidence



Capital Press File

Wheat is shown growing in a field. South Korea has resumed its purchases of U.S. wheat now that the nation has a new test in place for genetically engineered wheat.

that any genetically engineered wheat is in commercial U.S. wheat supplies. Genetically engineered wheat is not commercially available.

"We think this adds confidence in other markets that nothing has changed the U.S. wheat supply chain's ability to deliver wheat that matches every customer's specifications," Mercer said.

Japan also temporarily suspended purchases of Western white wheat, a blend of soft white wheat and subclass club wheat grown in the Pacific Northwest and sold to customers in Japan and Taiwan.

Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is customizing the test for its use. U.S. Wheat expects the test to be ready by mid- to late August.

Mercer noted that Japan has four wheat tenders in August for October delivery, which leaves room to make up any difference caused by the disruption.

Japan and South Korea rank first and fifth in the top customers for U.S. wheat overall. Japan has purchased an average of 997,000 metric tons of white wheat each year for the last five years, and South Korea has purchased an average of 679,000 metric tons per year.

HERMISTON

Bus service may come in early 2017

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Hermiston could get a fixed-route public bus system as early as January.

The city council will discuss the possibility Monday during a work session at 6 p.m. at city hall.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the city has discussed a fixed-route system with the Oregon Department of Transportation for years, but the discussion always "collapsed under its own weight and never really got anywhere." This year, however, after the city set aside money to create a Dial-a-Ride program starting January 2, Morgan said ODOT changed its tune and became more willing to speed up the process.

"ODOT would prefer we go the fixed route," he said.

The plan now is to partner with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation on their Kayak Public Transit program, which travels between cities and currently has two stops in Hermiston. Morgan said a

route hasn't been set yet and some of the funding details still need to be worked out. But a tentative plan would be for a second Kayak bus to be sent over from Pendleton each morning, spend all day driving around a fixed route through Hermiston and then help bring people back to Pendleton in the evening.

"It will probably cost us more (than a Dial-a-Ride program) but the level of service would increase dramatically," Morgan said.

Monday's agenda doesn't have any action items concerning the bus system, but the hour-long work session before the council's regular 7 p.m. meeting will give councilors a chance to get up to speed on the latest developments and give staff input on what they would like to see.

During the regular 7 p.m. meeting the council will consider adoption of a public art plan. The city's Community Enhancement Committee has been developing one with the help of consultant Rebecca Couch. The plan does not set

aside money for art, but rather gives suggestions for policies, locations and types of art to use as money comes available through community donations or grants.

"We're not locking ourselves into anything," Morgan said.

The plan recommends public art displayed throughout the community at places like parks and street corners fall under five themes: water, transportation, agriculture, heritage and watermelons.

It also recommends 37 locations for art. The most preferred sites, according to public input gathered at the Eastern Oregon Arts Festival and Hermiston Saturday Market, are:

- An arch on Main Street and Highway 395 welcoming people to downtown
- Functional art such as decorative benches, lights and bike racks downtown
- "Welcome to Hermiston" signs at city entrances
- A medium-sized sculpture at the intersection of Southeast Second Street and Highway 395

Decorative lighting and landscaping at the old Armand Larive arch on Ridgeway Avenue

• Metal wall art and "yarn-bombing" at the Hermiston Public Library

• A medium sculpture and decorative fencing at Belt Park

• Decorative fencing along the Public Works property on Elm Avenue near Sunset Park

• A medium sculpture and mural on the sewer lift station wall at the intersection of Diagonal Road, Seventh Street and Main Street

• A mural on the storm-water building on Southeast Seventh Street

• A mural at Northeast Fourth Street and Catherine Avenue

• Sculpture plinths between Good Shepherd Medical Center and Elm Avenue for a rotating art gallery

• Vinyl wraps on utility boxes at all signalized intersections

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

PENDLETON

Future farm to hold first 'drone rodeo'

East Oregonian

With rodeo season in full swing, the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range wants to get in on the action.

Oregon Future Farm, the agricultural arm of the test range, will host a Drone Rodeo in Pendleton Aug. 18-19.

Although the rodeo won't feature any cowboys struggling to stay atop a bucking quadcopter, it will contain demonstrations from several agricultural UAS.

The first day starts at the Oregon National Guard Armory in Pendleton. Attendees will travel 20

minutes out of town to Linn Airstrip, where they will see multiple drones fly missions. Representatives from drone manufacturers and operators will be available to answer questions before the bus returns to Pendleton.

Attendees will return to the armory on the second day, which runs from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., where they will hear agricultural drone data presentations and discussions.

Registration can be found at www.pendleton-drone.rodeo. For more information, contact event organizer Jeff Lorton at jeff@dukejoseph.com or at 503-989-6933.

BMCC to again offer classes in Union County

La Grande Observer

Blue Mountain Community College will return to Union County after almost nine years away.

The Union County Board of Commissioners approved an out-of-district contract on Wednesday that will provide the funding and support BMCC needs to again offer classes in Union County.

The contract calls for BMCC to provide classes, including vocational and continuing education courses via a cooperative agreement with Union County and the La Grande School District.

"We are pleased to be able to do this," said Union County Commissioner Mark Davidson. "We had a vital need, and we met this need."

Union County will pay about \$14,000 a year to BMCC, and the La Grande School District will provide office space for a program coordinator. The coordinator's office will be at La Grande High School and will be provided with phone and internet service.

For about a year, the La

Grande School District, Union County and BMCC have been negotiating to reach the agreement finalized Wednesday.

"It was definitely a team effort. The residents of Union County are the benefactors of the effort," said La Grande School District Superintendent Larry Glaze.

Classes that may be offered by BMCC include those for welding, emergency medical technician certification, office management and mechatronics. Mechatronics involves fields where electronics and mechanical engineering are combined.

Classes will be offered based in part on the needs of the community. For example, if a Union County company indicates that it needs workers with a specific skill set, BMCC may offer classes addressing this need, Glaze said.

"They will gain vocational skills, which will help them be more competitive in the workforce," Glaze said.

High school students in Union County will pay

a discounted tuition rate of \$32 per credit hour and adults will be charged \$96 per credit hour, BMCC's standard rate, said the school president Cam Preus.

Preus and Glaze said the addition of BMCC will help Union County's economic development. They noted that according to economic development experts, one thing holding back La Grande when trying to attract new businesses is that

it has not had a community college available to provide the training need for its workforce.

An advisory committee of Union County residents will be appointed to oversee the BMCC program. Preus said the committee will have the important role of keeping the program on track.

"We want to make sure that we are providing what Union County wants," Preus said.

SUBMIT COMMUNITY NEWS

Submit information to: community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

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