

HERMISTON

Good Shepherd begins \$11M expansion

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Good Shepherd Health Care System broke ground Tuesday on an \$11 million expansion project that will bring an estimated 35 new jobs to the community when it is finished.

The expansion of the north wing of the campus will extend the Women's Center from about 4,500 square feet to 11,000 square feet. It will also add a slate of new exam rooms, provider offices and room to grow.

In addition to the new building space, the plaza will also see a redesign of its main boulevard through the campus, add additional parking and move the hospital's community gardens to a space that is three times as large as the one at the Hermiston Butte.

"This project is going to add a lot of flexibility and room for future growth," Good Shepherd President and CEO Dennis Burke told the audience at the groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday.

Burke said construction costs were expected to be more than \$9.5 million, with the purchase of new medical equipment bringing the total cost up to about \$11 million. He said it was exciting to see another expansion project go forward as Good Shepherd Health Care System continues to grow with the community.

"It just doesn't seem that



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Good Shepherd Health Care System President and CEO Dennis Burke speaks at a groundbreaking ceremony for the hospital's newest expansion project.

many years ago that this was all sagebrush," he said.

The construction project is expected to last 14 months, with an opening in the fall of 2017. It will take 180 tons of steel, 1,300 cubic yards of concrete, 72,000 bricks, 4,100 tons of asphalt and 35,000 worker hours to complete.

Thane Eddington of PKA Architects said his company worked with Dr. Gary Trupp to design rooms that were patient-friendly.

"There is more room for family members to be present and more room for proce-

dures," he said.

Nick Gonzales, senior project manager for Bouten Construction out of Spokane, said his company was honored to work on a project that would have such a positive impact on the community through improved patient care.

"This is what gets us out of bed: projects that matter," he said.

After the groundbreaking ceremony, GSHCS spokesman Nick Bejarano said the redesigned boulevard through the campus should

help improve pedestrian safety. The project is expected to wrap up about the same time as a separate Oregon Department of Transportation project to add traffic signals and more turn lanes to the nearby intersection of 11th Street and Elm Avenue, which should further improve traffic flow in and out of the medical plaza.

The project will also include a new parking lot with diagonal spaces and electric car charging stations to alleviate crowding in the current lots.

Gibbon Fire spreads over 100 acres

Blaze is zero percent contained

East Oregonian

Steep terrain is making life difficult for crews battling the lightning-sparked Gibbon Fire, about 20 miles east of Pendleton.

The blaze, which was first reported Monday, has now spread over 100 acres near Meacham Creek and Stumbough Ridge in the Blue Mountains. It is zero percent contained.

Firefighters are conducting back burns to draw the fire onto safer ground, while helicopters dump water and retardant to cool down the interior. There are approximately 51 personnel on scene, including the La Grande Interagency Hot Shot Crew, a Type 1 helicopter, a Type 2 helicopter, six engines and a Type 2 hand crew.

The fire originally started within the Umatilla Indian Reservation on fee lands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry, and has since spread onto the Umatilla National Forest. No structures are threatened. The CTUIR and

Union Pacific Railroad are assisting fire managers.

Other Eastern Oregon wildfires include:

- Rail Fire — Started July 31, and has spread over 10,702 acres approximately 10 miles southwest of Unity in Baker County. There are 765 people, 26 crews, 10 dozers, 29 engines, 19 water tenders and 7 helicopters assigned to the fire, which has entered the Monument Rock Wilderness Area. The cause is still unknown.

- Juntura Complex — Made up of three wildfires burning near the Malheur River between Vale and Burns. Started Aug. 7 due to lightning in the area. All together, the fires are burning 12,825 acres and are threatening several homes, along with rangeland, sage grouse habitat and the Highway 20 corridor.

- Durkee Complex — Located west of Durkee in Baker County, about four miles from Interstate 84. Started Aug. 5 by lightning, the complex is composed of six fires and 850 total acres. It is now 75 percent contained.

To report a fire, call the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center at 541-963-7171 or dial 9-1-1.

Lead testing results continue to flow in

By **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

On Tuesday, two more local school districts reported the results of testing for higher-than-normal levels of lead in water.

The Helix School District got news that its drinking water is safe. At the Athena-Weston School District, however, three of 45 sites showed lead above acceptable limits.

"The Athena-Weston School District has complied with Oregon state guidelines to test our water sites and we are now addressing the sites where elevated levels were detected," said Athena-Weston School Superintendent Laure Quaresma, in a news release. "We will continue to monitor and update our parents and our community."

The three sites will remain unavailable to children until the problem is corrected. The sites will be re-tested after new faucets and other plumbing fixes are finished.

Meanwhile, Helix School Superintendent Darrick Cope said he is relieved at his district's clean report. Cope himself had collected water from all drinking fountains and kitchen faucets and sent them in plastic 250-milliliter

vials to Table Rock Analytical for testing in July. The samples came from the main school buildings, both gyms and the band/wood shop. Testing cost \$500.

He worried most about Griswold High School, which was built in 1923 and remodeled in 2013.

"The main piping coming into the building had been replaced but I was a little concerned," he said.

The Northwest's accredited water testing laboratories are getting a serious workout this summer after the Oregon Department of Education and the Oregon Health Authority recommended that schools test for lead in water. They are moving toward a plan to require testing for lead and radon.

Beth Read, chemist and owner of Table Rock Analytical in Pendleton, said the lab is exceptionally busy collecting water samples, submitting them for testing and reporting the results. Table Rock oversaw testing for Hermiston, the Inter-Mountain Education Service District, North Powder, Ontario and others.

Table Rock subcontracts with other labs such as Anatek Labs, which analyzed Athena-Weston's water. Justin Doty, who works in

claims services at Anatek, said the workload has spiked at the company's Washington and Idaho labs.

"Most of the schools we are testing for are located in Oregon," Doty said. "Oregon is the only state I've noticed (that) is being proactive in testing so far."

Kari Salis, of the Oregon Health Authority's Drinking Water Services program, said the amount of lead in water must test lower than 20 parts per billion. Water is collected following federal Environmental Protection Agency guidelines.

"The first draw must sit stagnant in the pipes for eight to 18 hours," Salis said.

If the water tests for lead, another is undertaken. After waiting another eight to 18 hours, a 30-second flush of the pipes is done before filling the vial with water. If the water tests low this time, the problem could be in the faucet. If high, the lead might be originating in the pipes or solder.

Testing and mitigation of lead in school water can be expensive. The Portland School District will spend an estimated \$1.2 million on testing alone. State funds may be available this fall to reimburse districts that test this summer.

HERMISTON

City council adopts public art plan

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Whether it's a watermelon mural or a statue of the mayor, the city of Hermiston now has a plan for how to handle public art.

The city council adopted an official public art plan Monday. The plan does not allocate money, but rather lays a groundwork of policies and suggestions for community organizations to raise money for projects.

"This plan will sit on a shelf and go nowhere if the community does not pick it up," assistant city manager Mark Morgan said.

Included in the plan are 37 suggested sites for art installations, and five themes for public art in Hermiston to be tied to: water, agriculture, heritage, transportation and watermelons. Morgan said the themes could be loosely interpreted.

"We're not saying you literally have to have water in the art, or literally depict a drop of water," he said.

He used the hypothetical example of a someone who wanted to build a statue of

Mayor David Drotzmann. Now, they could consult the plan to see the community's most preferred locations for a statue, see where the mayor might fit into one of the five themes (heritage?), study the rules about commissioning and maintaining the art, get permission from the city council and apply for a special revenue fund where the city would keep track of donations for them and possibly leverage it as matching funds for a grant to put a statue of Drotzmann in front of city hall.

"Could we raise money to not have a statue of him in front of city hall?" councilor Jackie Myers asked jokingly.

Morgan said some of the actual ideas on the list were already being eyed by service clubs in town — Hermiston's breakfast Kiwanis Club, for example, said they would like to start raising money for uplifting and landscaping around the old Armand Larive Middle School arch on Ridgeway Avenue behind the library.

The plan was put together by consultant Rebecca Couch, the Community Enhancement

Committee and the Desert Arts Council, with feedback from the community to rank the most popular of the 37 proposed locations.

"Everyone has a big focus on putting art downtown," Morgan said.

That could be functional art such as decorative benches and lamp posts, but Morgan said several cities also have a popular rotating art program where they build empty sculpture plinths, and artists can get approval to place sculptures there temporarily while they are for sale.

Drotzmann said even though there is no money allocated for art in the plan itself, it is possible that the city could use it as a guide to funnel some urban renewal money toward a city-funded art project or two downtown. Still, he said outside groups were needed if Hermiston was going to start putting art in more locations around town.

"All those philanthropic groups out there who would like to help make Hermiston more livable through public art, please come forward," he said. "We have some ideas for you."

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