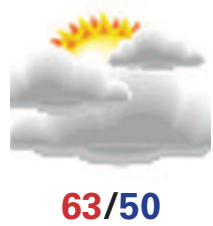


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FINAL POPLAR RUN GETS HUGE TURNOUT REGION/3A



EAST OREGONIAN

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2016

141st Year, No. 6

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One dollar

HERMISTON



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The city of Hermiston will a new one-mile section of trail that will run down Highland Avenue and connect with the Riverfront Park and Oxbow trails.

TRAILBLAZERS

City moving forward with next phase of loop path

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Another mile of trail will be added next year to the 6.5 mile loop the city is building around the western half of Hermiston.

The city council approved an intergovernmental agreement with the Oregon Department of Transportation on Monday to build a trail for cyclists and pedestrians along the south side of Highland Avenue between SW 11th Street and SW 23rd Street near Riverfront Park. Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the trail could end up going even farther along Highland than that, depending on "when he money runs out."

The \$663,225 West Highland Trail project fits into the wider vision of a Hermiston Loop Trail that will eventually allow bicyclists and pedestrians to make a 6.5 mile loop around the western side of Hermiston.

The first leg of that project came when the popular Oxbow Trail opened in 2014, creating a meandering 1.5 mile asphalt trail connected to Riverfront Park.

The stretch of Highland featured in the West Highland Trail project is currently bordered by a patchwork of

Hermiston loop trail plan



Source: City of Hermiston

Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group

sidewalks, bike lanes and gravel shoulder. A contribution of \$150,000 from the city and \$513,000 from ODOT would turn it into a multi-use trail

running parallel to the road on the south side of Highland. Construction is expected to take place next summer.

City Manager Byron Smith

told the council that the city was still working with the Department of Fish and Wildlife

See TRAIL/8A

Avakian campaign accused of violations

Staff denies allegations of bonuses paid for work done on state time

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Brad Avakian's campaign denied wrongdoing following accusations made Monday that his campaign fund paid government employees for campaign work, and that the work may have been done on state time.

Avakian, the Democratic candidate for secretary of state, is the head of the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

In an opinion piece Monday on Forbes.com, Andrew Andrzejewski, of Open The Books, a private transparency group, claimed that three of Avakian's employees were paid money out of Avakian's campaign fund and that two of those employees also contributed to Avakian's campaign for secretary of state.



Avakian

The piece alleges BOLI communications director Charlie Burr, BOLI legislative director Paloma Sparks and Jesse Bontecou, Avakian's executive assistant, were paid a total of \$4,500 from Avakian's campaign fund in 2014 and 2015.

Brad Pyle, Avakian's campaign manager, said payments from the campaign fund, the Committee to Elect Brad Avakian, to three BOLI employees in 2014 and 2015 were

See AVAKIAN/8A

HERMISTON

Poll shows shrinking support for school bond

School board considers new data on proposed \$104M bond

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The closer the Hermiston School District gets to committing to a campaign for a \$104 million bond, the less Hermiston residents seem interested in passing it.

On Monday, the Hermiston School Board discussed the findings of a new public survey, which collected findings from 373 registered voters between Oct. 3-7, a majority of whom were active in three or four of the last elections.

Prepared by The Nelson Report, a public opinion research firm based out of Salem, the survey revealed that 48 percent of respondents opposed the bond proposal versus 46 percent in favor.

This is a flip from a survey in May, when 47 percent of respondents supported the bond and 43 percent didn't.

Furthermore, the amount of people surveyed who were undecided dipped from 10 percent in May to 6 percent in October. The most recent survey's margin of error is 5 percent.

Despite the change in attitude, Superintendent Fred Maiocco urged the board not to be intimidated by the numbers, especially considering that surveys before a 2008 bond showed public support between 50-52 percent before it passed with more than 53 percent.

"Whether it's the presidential cycle, the state attention to the ballots or it's this specific issue (people) are concerned about, we have a little more opposition," he said. "We have to be aware of that, but it's not out of bounds by

See BOND/8A

HERMISTON

EOTEC rodeo lease gets second look from officials

City, county question 50 year deal

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Hermiston and Umatilla County officials hope to rein in overly generous leases at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

The board overseeing the center could vote Friday to allow the Farm-City Pro Rodeo to lease the mercantile area near the future rodeo arena for 50 years for a one-time payment

of \$50. But Hermiston Mayor Dave Drotzmann, Hermiston City Manager Byron Smith and the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners met about it Monday in Pendleton and expressed concerns the lease could set a precedent and leave taxpayers on the hook to cover expenses.

"EOTEC needs to be — as close as we can get it — to self sustaining," Commissioner Larry Gives said, and carving

out niche deals would not get that done.

Gives is one of the county's three representative on the center's seven-member authority board, which Smith chairs. Smith also negotiated the lease.

Drotzmann said the two local governments have provided millions of taxpayer dollars to help create the center at 1705 E. Airport Road, Hermiston, that in 2017 will house the 28-year-old rodeo and county fair, and the authority board deciding how to

See EOTEC/8A



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