

BMCC: Smith first of family to graduate from college

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He completed a drug treatment program and worked a steady job at Keystone RV. Eventually, his mind drifted to his dream of college and he finally enrolled at BMCC in 2013.

A setback came a year ago, when a seizure forced Smith's body into a backbend so severe that it fractured his back in 10 places. He spent a month in a care facility, learning how to walk again. He entertained thoughts of giving up his college plans.

"For the first time since I started this new positive chapter in my life, going to BMCC, I felt like my hopes and dreams were again impossible to achieve," Smith said. "I struggled in so many ways that my mind had pushed me to the breaking point and I felt like giving up. Then, out of the blue, I started to receive phone calls and visits from the amazing staff here at BMCC."

He thanked them for "love, kindness, compassion and devotion to my success."

"I am living proof that it doesn't matter how old you are, what you grow up



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Charles Wood performs a native song called the "Honor Song" during the commencement ceremony on Thursday in Pendleton.

believing is real or what obstacles you may encounter along your journey," Smith said. "Anyone can change the course of their life, anyone can achieve what they set out to accomplish and dreams can save lives."

Now that he has earned his Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degree, his next stop is Oregon State University where he plans to study psychology and sociology. He hopes to continue his studies until he earns his doctorate.

Smith's class at BMCC

includes 393 graduates ranging in age from 17 to 66, a dozen military veterans and 142 who graduated with high honors. Nine graduates earned high school diplomas and Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degrees simultaneously. His fellow "Blue U" grads listened attentively to Smith, their tassels hanging off the right side of their royal blue mortar boards.

The second student speaker of the night, Sarah Bonner, echoed Smith's assessment of BMCC as a nurturing place. The

Montana-raised infielder on the college softball team and officer in Associated Student Government said support is never far away.

"The encouragement and love that our staff have is seen in every building all the way to our amazing President Cam Preus," Bonner said. "As we walk through these halls no student is unimportant, overlooked or left to fail."

Bonner will pursue a bachelor's degree in health and human performance and later a master's in sports medicine.

Later, as Smith walked across the platform during the conferring of certificates and degrees, he grinned at his cheering fellow grads, received his diploma, shook the hand of BMCC President Camille Preus and lifted his diploma folder high while flashing an unconstrained grin.

Christopher Smith, the first to graduate from college from his family, had done it. Now, on to the next dream.

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HERMISTON: Gas tax would need to be approved by voters

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natural gas, cable and telecommunications.

"Before we start to develop what that plan looks like, we really need to have an idea of what the resources are going to be," assistant city manager Mark Morgan said.

In a 12-page memo to the committee, Morgan recently laid out the city's main options for raising money for street projects: increasing franchise fees to 7 percent, adding a \$5 surcharge to utility bills or adopting a 5 cent gas tax.

Outside of the city's control, but also a possible revenue stream, is the major transportation package the legislature is hoping to pass before the end of their 2017 session. If the bill passes as currently written the city would receive additional street maintenance revenue from the state's plan to raise the gas tax by 14 cents per gallon, in addition to funding a multi-million dollar overhaul of First Place that would include traffic signals at its intersections with Highland Avenue and Orchard Avenue.

Other street projects the city's public infrastructure committee is looking at listing in the capital improvement plan include paving roads like East Theater Lane, overlays on various worn-out streets and extending Gettman Road to Highway 395 so that it can be used as another major east-west corridor through town.

Morgan said even if the state's transportation bill passes, the committee is still leaning toward a recommendation to raise franchise fees as well.

He said the problem with a flat \$5 utility fee on city water and sewer is that the burden of paying for street projects would fall completely on residents within Hermiston city limits. Hermiston's population is about 17,750 but there are 37,000 people living within a 10 mile radius of the city. About two thirds of the people who work

in Hermiston don't live in city limits, and more than a third of people living within Hermiston School District's boundaries don't live in city limits either.

Many of those people still drive Hermiston roads almost daily, however.

"They're buying groceries, they're bringing the kids to school," Morgan said.

Increasing franchise fees (currently at three to five percent) to seven percent of gross revenues would leave it up to the service providers to decide how to pass the cost onto customers. It would also shift more of the burden to larger customers like Wal-Mart. Both of those factors mean some of the cost would likely be spread to people who drive Hermiston roads daily but don't pay city property taxes.

Gas taxes would capture some non-Hermiston residents, but Morgan said Hermiston's gas stations sell 35 percent less fuel than the average city of Hermiston's size. That's because commuters heading into Hermiston usually meet a fuel station — Space Age and Pilot off of Interstate 84, Short Stop off of Diagonal Road and Umatilla stations off Interstate 82 — before they get into city limits. An extra gas tax on stations inside city limits would give highway stations an even bigger competitive advantage and likely encourage people to fill up outside of Hermiston more frequently.

A gas tax would also need to be approved by voters.

Morgan said the public infrastructure committee will know before it is done with the capital improvement plan what the legislature does with the transportation package and will be able to factor in that revenue or lack thereof into the roads portion of the plan. Other portions, including water and sewer infrastructure, will likely be paid for by utility rate increases over time.

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CHAMBER: City plans to remodel upstairs of the library

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fully space for a conference room where groups like the chamber's Leadership Hermiston class could meet. He said the city is willing to let the chamber continue to hold some of its traditional events like the Business 2 Business luncheon and the Distinguished Citizens Awards banquet at the conference center.

The chamber's new space would also have to be affordable for a not-for-profit organization.

"We don't have a lot of resources, so it is going to take some creativity for us," Burns said.

During the meeting in April when the city council voted to end its contract with the chamber, passions ran high as chamber supporters turned out in force to testify they felt it was disrespectful to try to put the chamber in

a basement. They said the city had seriously damaged its relationship with the chamber in the way it had handled the situation and complained about a lack of communication.

Since that time, however, Burns said he felt relations between the city and chamber had improved, and he personally appreciated how "open and transparent" Mayor David Drotzmann has been their meetings together to discuss ways for both entities to continue to be partners moving forward.

"The fact that the city offered us any location illustrated that the city wants to keep working with the chamber, because they didn't have to do that," Burns said.

He said the chamber is still interested in running a visitor center for Hermiston in the future. If the city follows through on longterm plans to remodel the upstairs

and exterior portions of the Carnegie Library and possibly turn the upstairs into some sort of visitor center and museum, he said the chamber would be interested in discussing a partnership involving the building at that point.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the chamber's declination to use the Carnegie Library basement at this point might change the design of the remodel slightly but wasn't deterring the city from putting the remodel out to bid on Thursday.

"We still need office space in general," he said.

In January the city will be moving the parks and recreation staff to the chamber's current office in the Hermiston Conference Center. The plan had been to move the building department from the upstairs of the Carnegie Library

into the current parks and recreation offices at city hall so that they can be next to the planning department. But Morgan said now the city is looking at moving the planning department into the Carnegie Library instead, and offering space for city engineers Anderson Perry & Associates, plus Umatilla County Fire District 1's fire marshal, to hold office hours there each week so that developers can have a "true one-stop shop" in the Carnegie Library and city employees across the street in city hall would have more elbow room.

Morgan said over time the city plans to also remodel the upstairs of the Carnegie Library and to repair the roof, retaining wall and other exterior features.

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HHS: This year's graduating class was 332 students

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district would bring the issue before the school board this fall.

"The challenge is that our crowds are growing, and we can only accommodate the same number of people. This year we allowed each student to have five tickets for family members, and last year it was six. I anticipate it would go down to four next year, and that's just too few."

Maiocco said this year about 300 people watched the graduation on a screen in the auditorium, and more overflowed into the school commons. There were 1,800 in the gym, not including the students and staff on the floor. This year's graduating class of 332 students came from a school population of about 1,600.

Of the three options the district is exploring, Maiocco said there are some chal-

lenges with each.

"We're taking another look at the Bulldog stadium, Kennison Field," he said. But he noted several disadvantages to using that facility, including the lack of air conditioning, and the distance between the crowd and graduates.

"And it only provides a couple hundred more seats," he said.

The EOTEC rodeo grounds are another option, Maiocco said, that would not address the problem of outdoor heat.

"Unfortunately the EOTEC building is not big enough," he said.

With nothing in the region on the Oregon side large enough to hold such large crowds, the district has also begun looking across the river. Holding graduation the Toyota Center would be a major change, but mitigates some of the issues

the district is looking to address. Maiocco said this year, the district sent a team up to review a graduation at the Toyota Center, and felt it may be a good option for Hermiston.

"The basic rental would be less than \$10,000 to rent a facility," Maiocco said. "But that's not the only cost. We'd look at transportation, all logistics."

But he added that Hermiston already spends about \$10,000 on graduation, even at its own facility.

Maiocco said the district is currently analyzing its options.

"We'll certainly take public input, and provide all kinds of opportunities for that," he said. "But ultimately, it's a school board decision."

Maiocco said the district aims to find a solution to its graduation issues for the upcoming school year.

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OPENINGS FOR OPERATORS OF NEW RETAIL LIQUOR LOCATIONS

OLCC is recruiting applicants for new retail liquor locations. The open recruitment process is a market-driven effort to improve customer convenience by expanding retail liquor locations with a measured, but consistent amount of growth.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission is accepting applications and aiming to add new retail liquor locations in the following counties:

Baker County	Grant County	Sherman County	Wasco County
Crook County	Hood River County	Umatilla County	Wheeler County
Deschutes County	Jefferson County	Union County	
Gilliam County	Morrow County	Wallowa County	

Applicants are evaluated on background, knowledge and work experience in:

- Retail business management
- Inventory/cash management
- Retail sales and operation
- Customer service/public relations in a retail environment
- Financial ability to open and operate a retail liquor location

A detailed business plan will be required as part of the application process.

For additional information on open recruitment for new retail liquor locations and application information, visit: http://www.oregon.gov/OLCC/LIQUORSTORES/Pages/liquorsalesoutlets_openrecruitment.aspx

Questions can be directed to OLCC.RetailServices@oregon.gov or call 503-872-5020 (toll-free 1-800-426-2004, Dept # 62). Provide your name, email address and phone number. Applications can also be picked up at 9079 SE McLoughlin Blvd., Portland, OR 97222.

An application with a business plan must be received at OLCC's main office in Portland at the above address, by 5:00 PM, Monday, July 31st, 2017. Applications received after this deadline will not be accepted. Additional open recruitments for these areas and others in the state may occur in the future.