

## TRAFFIC: Two exits onto Airport Road during peak hours

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The second will be the livestock exit on Ott Road, which has primarily been used for exhibitors and contestants.

The main change for exiting the fairgrounds, Miller said, is that there will now be a direct exit from the rodeo parking lot onto Ott Road.

He added that during peak hours, there would be two exits onto Airport Road: Those parked on asphalt could exit on the paved road, and those parked in the dirt parking lot could use the dirt road at the west end of the property.

### Entry

Miller said fair organizers have completely restructured entry into the fairgrounds.

When patrons drive up on Airport Road, they will be met with several signs that direct them into one of four lanes. The first lane, farthest right on the paved driveway, will be reserved for rodeo traffic, buses and people picking up their children. Those cars will be forced to turn right on the asphalt parking lot and either go to the main fair gate or continue right to the rodeo grounds. The second lane — the left lane on the paved driveway — will be for season ticket holders and handicapped visitors. Those people will be directed into the main asphalt parking lot.

The final two lanes of traffic will be directed to the



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

**A water truck sprays down one of the dirt parking lots in an effort to control dust Thursday at the Umatilla County Fair in Hermiston.**

**“Whether you’re talking about parking, RVs, traffic entry, the livestock gate — this has been a brand new experience with new challenges.”**

— Don Miller, fair and EOTEC board member

left of the paved driveway, onto the dirt. They will be sent to the far end of the parking lot, where they will turn left and be directed to park

“It should keep the flow good, and resolve the high degree of delays we experienced on the first big night of the fair,” Miller said.

He added that he wasn’t worried about those paying

for parking slowing down the process, and that signs should be clear enough that people will know where they are supposed to be.

“We’ll have a minimum of one person in each lane doing ticketing,” he said. “We don’t think that will be any problem.”

Miller said while organizers knew there would be issues, they’ve been happy

with the way different groups have worked together to solve problems.

“Whether you’re talking about parking, RVs, traffic entry, the livestock gate — this has been a brand new experience with new challenges,” he said. “The city of Hermiston, sheriff’s department, Hermiston Police Department, fire and safety, we’re all meeting every morning and reviewing the difficulties we’ve experienced on the previous day and addressing effective solutions.”

Contact Jayati Ramakrishnan at [jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4534

## VILLEGAS: ‘This is not how we wanted the case to play out’

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his wife, Maria Villegas, and their children on May 26, 2016, in their Milton-Free-water home. Maria Villegas died from her injuries. Davis argued Villegas could not understand the consequences of his actions in the moment nor could he control his behavior. He also tried to kill himself, she said, and his mental state has improved with treatment and confinement.

Jaclyn Jenkins, Umatilla County chief deputy prosecutor, said the state had a third expert review the two evaluations, but those findings were inconclusive to whether Villegas was in the midst of a mental episode when he committed the crimes.

“This is not how we wanted the case to play out,” Jenkins said. “I believed this is the only course available to us at this time.”

Hampton asked Villegas if he was now “in the full state of his mind,” and he replied he was.

Villegas pleaded guilty except for insanity to murder for the death of Maria Villegas and to two counts of attempted aggravated murder, one for each child. Per the plea agreement, Hampton sentenced Villegas to a maximum term of life for the murder and to maximums of 20 years each for the attempted murders. The charges all run consecutive.

Rather than prison, Villegas will serve his time in a state mental hospital under the eye of the Psychiatric Security Review Board. If the state finds Villegas no longer would be a threat to himself or others, he would not return home. Rather, Davis explained, he would be deported.

“My client is a legal,

permanent resident but was not born here,” Davis said after the hearing. Yet federal case law allows for deportation of such residents who are guilty of serious felonies, even in the case of guilty except for insanity.

Davis also said most offenders who are guilty but insane end up serving as much time or more in a mental hospital than if they were going to prison.

Hampton also forbid Villegas from having any contact with his children. The judge noted the children are in the care of his side of

the family and stressed they must report any attempt he makes to contact them.

“They’ve been monitoring that, yes,” Davis responded.

Several family members and friends of Maria Villegas attended the hearing. Two of them addressed the judge before the sentencing.

Maria Villegas’s mother spoke through tears and said this was not justice for her daughter, who came to the United States to have a better life.

“My daughter, my baby,” she cried. “I’m never going to hold her again because of what happened.”

A woman who said Maria Villegas was like her little sister told the court their lives will never be the same.

“We carry this hole in our hearts because she’s not there,” she said.

After sentencing Villegas and ordering him to the care of the psychiatric board, Hampton said “that brings these proceedings, these sad proceedings, to a close.”

Contact Phil Wright at [pwright@eastoregonian.com](mailto:pwright@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0833.



Villegas

## FOOD: Nonprofit locations a little off the beaten path

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Hamm said they were a “great replacement” for the old buildings and the Lions Club was grateful for the accommodations.

Ruth Carollo, who was taking orders for ice cream at the Vange John Memorial Hospice food truck next door, said the nonprofit had no problem switching to their new digs.

“The old fairgrounds booth was bigger, but the nice thing about this is it’s air conditioned,” she said.

The one problem she did see was that the nonprofits, which were located along the wrought iron fence on the southern edge of the fairgrounds, were a little off the beaten path. Fewer people were stopping by, drawn in by the out-of-town food vendors they could see from the entrance. Carollo said she understood, though, that when the fair board was deciding where to put vendors they didn’t know for sure how the foot traffic would flow in the new location.

“It’s so hard to know,” she said. “I’m sure they’ll make adjustments.”

She said she enjoyed getting to see the new fairgrounds and thought the rodeo grounds in particular were “beautiful.”

“I think over time this will be a nice addition to Hermiston and the county,” she said.

The only nonprofit that decided they didn’t want to continue using the fair as a fundraiser was Hermiston



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

**Ruty’s restaurant is in its fourth year serving food at the Umatilla County Fair in Hermiston.**

**“The best reason to be here is it’s an advertisement. You get to meet more people.”**

— Natalie Hernandez, Ruty’s Restaurant

Christian School.

Not everyone working at food booths at the fair was a volunteer for a nonprofit.

Lined up along the grassy commons area were several local restaurants with the means to go mobile for the week. Elijah and Natalie Hernandez were busy serving up tacos, burritos and other Mexican food for Ruty’s

Restaurant.

Natalie said it was the Hermiston business’s fourth year at the fair.

“The best reason to be here is it’s an advertisement,” she said. “You get to meet more people.”

Elijah said business had been steady at their booth, especially after the rodeo got out on Wednesday night.

Junior Ortega was working a booth for 395 Quickstop, also of Hermiston, which featured everything from nachos to snow cones. If anyone at the fair felt in need of a little refreshment, he said, “we can help them out.” His only complaint about the first year in the new location was the hot weather, which he acknowledged was

not something anyone could control.

Having employees come out and work the fair all week is busy, Ortega said, but worth it.

“It involves us with the community,” he said. “We see our local customers and gain new customers.”

Mixed in with the local restaurants are the usual out-of-town vendors like Piggly’s BBQ that make their money traveling from event to event in the summer selling favorite fair foods like curly fries, Navajo tacos, kettle corn, fresh-squeezed lemonade and corn dogs.

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

## ANDERSON: Enjoyed talking politics and playing pinochle

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who died of cancer three years later.

After hitting 100 years, the centenarian stayed sharp, talking politics and playing pinochle. She walked a mile each day using her wheeled walker and stayed active in the Pendleton Friends of Lesbians and Gays to honor a grandson who is gay. Education was important to Anderson. Shortly before she died, she cast her vote in favor of a school bond measure from her hospital bed.

She read voraciously.

It was that latter quality that sparked the idea of how to honor Anderson. A recently installed tiny library now sits under two towering linden trees in the North Hill front yard of her grandson, Pendleton City Councilman Scott Fairley, and his wife, Kimbra Cook.

The constantly fluctuating collection of 25-or-so books is available to anyone who stops by the yard at 115 N.W. Eighth St. No library card is required. If you see a book you’d like to read, take it. Replace it with another. Or not.

“There are no rules at this library,” said Fairley, who misses talking politics with his grandmother and getting soundly beaten by her in pinochle.

Two local authors who live on the block, Sarah Woodbury and Toni Devine, placed some of their own books inside the wooden compartment with front-facing doors.

Built by son-in-law John Mitchell in his Seattle woodshop, the library is a replica of the Fairview schoolhouse, which was built on land donated by Anderson’s father near where the family lived in

Clyde, Washington. Robert Cline only attended school through eighth grade, but championed education, said Frasier.

“He donated farmland to erect the Fairview School in 1902,” Frasier said. “Throughout their lives, my grandparents made whatever sacrifices were necessary to see that their five children had the advantages of an education.”

The hilltop school finally sagged and fell down, succumbing to the weather. In 1994, Anderson and her four siblings had a replica of the school built at the site honoring their parents’ dedication to education.

The idea of modeling the little library after the school and placing it in Fairley and Cook’s front yard seemed like a natural. Cook, formerly children’s librarian at the Pendleton Public Library, was recently

hired to run the library at Washington Elementary School.

Cook said the little library is already getting use. One day, she was thrilled to see her middle school librarian Lorna Waltz checking it out and adding a few books.

“People stop all the time to look,” Cook said. “But that was the biggest thrill.”

She thinks the library is a perfect tribute to Roberta Anderson.

“She was such a big proponent of community,” Cook said. “A neighborhood library — it doesn’t get any more basic than that.”

Anderson’s little library, with a plaque denoting it as part of LittleFreeLibrary.org, is one of about 50,000 Little Free Libraries worldwide.

Contact Kathy Aney at [kaney@eastoregonian.com](mailto:kaney@eastoregonian.com) or call 541-966-0810.

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