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One dollar

HERMISTON Graduation may move next door, or out of state

School board considers EOTEC, Kennison and Toyota Center

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

The Hermiston School Board will soon consider whether to move the high school graduation ceremony after several years of growing graduating classes have limited the number of family members who can attend the ceremony.

At its meeting on Monday night, the board heard a presentation from Hermiston High School Principal Tom Spoo and Athletic Director Larry Usher about the different options available to the district.

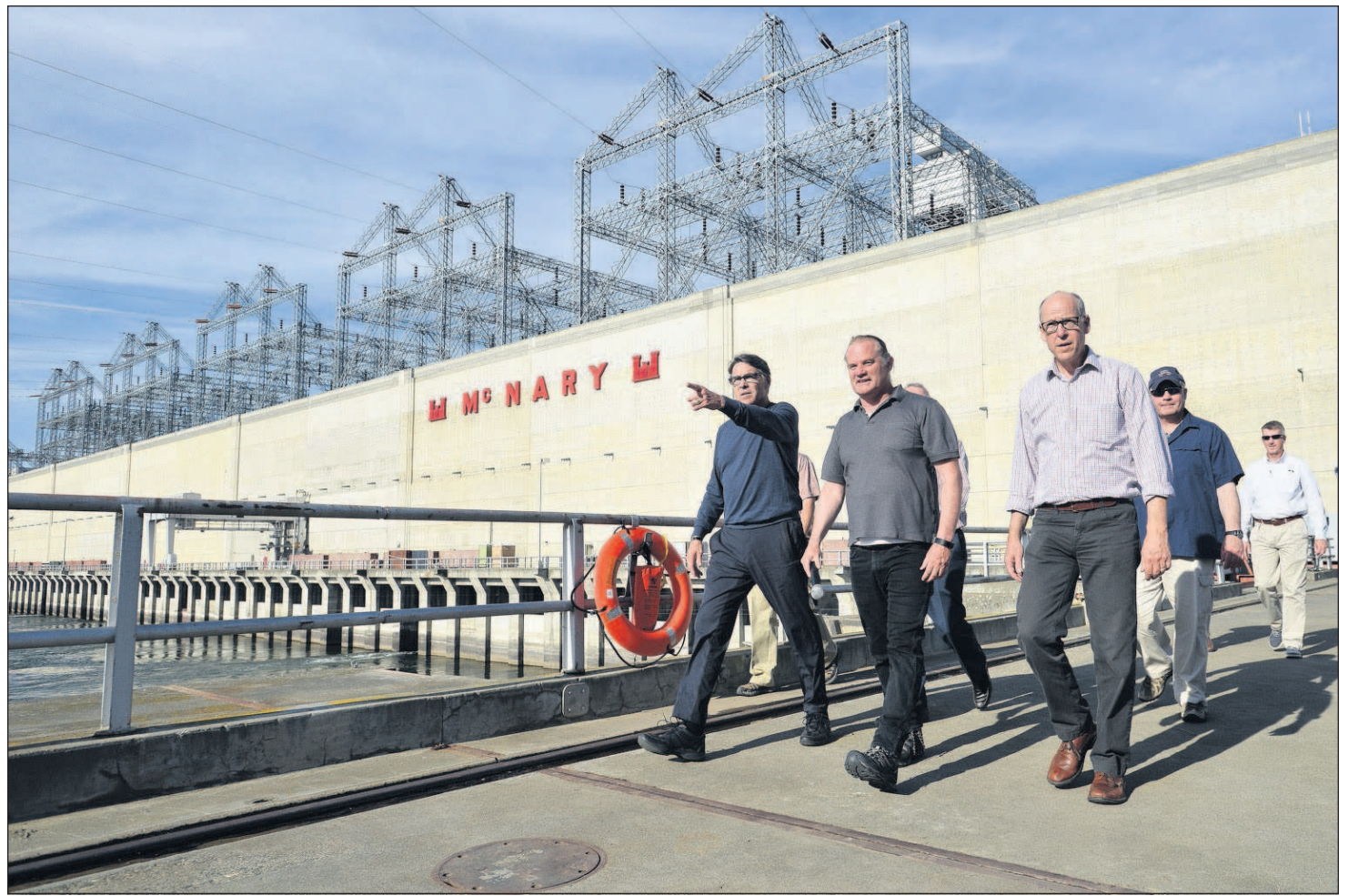
Spoo and Usher presented four options: staying in the current venue, moving outside to Kennison Field, to the new EOTEC rodeo grounds, or to the Toyota Center in Kennewick.

At this year's graduation, students were given five tickets each for guests, one fewer than last year's allotment. Usher estimated that with the projected senior class size, 2018 would see a reduction to four tickets per student. The high school gymnasium seats about 1,800 people, not including graduates. This year, the district also streamed graduation in the auditorium, which seated about 500 more, and in the high school commons. Additionally, Spoo said, the current venue has limited handicap access and visibility.

"We are over capacity," he said. The two administrators presented the advantages and challenges that would result from each venue change, but many of the same issues lingered. Kennison Field, they said, provides about 200 more seats, but is outside, and weather issues could interfere with the ceremony. The EOTEC rodeo grounds seat about 3,400 but, as an outdoor venue, still could present challenges with the weather. Both the outdoor venues, Spoo said, would increase the workload for district staff — as the gymnasium would still have to be set up in case of bad weather.

Spoo and Usher asked board members to consider the Toyota Center in Kennewick, which seats 5,000 and is indoors. No tickets

See GRADUATION/9A



Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, McNary Dam operations manager Dave Coleman and Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., tour the McNary Dam on Monday in Umatilla. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Perry mum on BPA sale

Energy secretary tours McNary Dam; Walden confident agency will remain public



Secretary of Energy Rick Perry speaks about hydro electric power at a press conference after touring the McNary Dam with Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., on Monday in Umatilla. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

By GEORGE PLAVEN
East Oregonian

U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry was noncommittal Monday when asked about a proposal in the president's budget to privatize the Bonneville Power Administration transmission grid following a tour of McNary Dam along the Columbia River.

Perry, who was joined by congressmen Greg Walden (R-Oregon) and Dan Newhouse (R-Washington), met briefly with reporters outside the dam where he said hydroelectricity will continue to play an important role in America's energy strategy. The Trump administration,

however, has proposed selling off transmission assets owned by BPA, which markets electric power generated by the Columbia River system — including McNary Dam. Northwest lawmakers have roundly criticized the plan, saying it will raise rates for consumers and affect reliability in rural areas.

In fact, both Walden and Newhouse signed on to a letter sent June 5 to Perry and Mick Mulvaney, director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, urging them to support the BPA.

"We believe divesting BPA's transmission assets

See PERRY/9A

"George A. Hash is somewhat of a World War II hero."

— Randy Hash, son of former Umatilla Mayor George Hash

Former Umatilla mayor, POW turns 95

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

As family members celebrate former Umatilla mayor George Hash's 95th birthday, his son Randy is hoping that his father's legacy is not forgotten.

Hash, who will turn 95 on Tuesday, was mayor from 1991 to 2004. But many years before Hash worked to promote economic development in western Umatilla County, he was being honored for his heroics during World War II.

Randy said his father never really shared stories from the war with his family until later in life, when Randy was a parent himself. He eventually learned that his dad, a member of the 101st Airborne Division, was one of the first Americans to parachute into Normandy behind enemy lines ahead of the D-day invasion. He later became a prisoner of war in Holland, but eventually escaped.

"George A. Hash is somewhat of a World War II hero," Randy said. "He's featured in the Smithsonian."

In a video interview with George online, featured with other veterans' oral histories on a website called "Mr. K's pages," he said he chose to be a paratrooper when he enlisted because he wanted to put on an outfit "that was going over there to do some



George Hash in 2017 and as a paratrooper during World War II. Contributed photo by Randy Hash

business."

"I figured that was the best choice if I wanted some combat," George said.

He also said he was "no kind of a hero," just one of thousands of soldiers following orders.

Randy said one of his father's brothers-in-arms called him out of the blue years ago to tell him about the day his father was captured. The Germans had killed several members of their company, and George grabbed a gun and went off by himself to ambush the Germans that had been

picking them off. The man told Randy they saw George from a distance keep shooting Germans until he had taken too many bullets to his arm and shoulder to continue re-loading. At that point, they thought George was dead. They later found out he had been loaded into the same flatbed truck as the injured Germans he had just shot and taken to Stalag 3C, a camp that held more than 1,500 American POWs, for interrogation and imprisonment.

See HASH/9A

Get ready for the eclipse rush

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Umatilla County Emergency Manager Tom Roberts advised locals to prepare for the influx of tourists coming for Monday's total solar eclipse.

"If there's anything they need to do as far as shopping, fuel, special needs, do that early in the week," he said.

Northern Umatilla and Morrow counties are not in the path of totality, he said, but eclipse viewers coming through the area to reach that path will hit gas stations and grocery stores on the way. That rush, he said, will have an effect on goods and services.

While he said he has not heard of businesses anticipating they will run dry, but an extra level of preparedness never hurts.

Local driving also could feel the crush. Roberts just worked the Umatilla County Fair, where its new home at Hermiston's Eastern Oregon Trade and Event

Center saw traffic backing up from East Airport Road to Highway 395. While the fair hammered that out, Roberts said a similar situation could occur as highways fill up.

For those heading south to see the moment of total darkness Monday morning,

Roberts suggested they take enough supplies of food and water, and maybe some extra fuel.

They also should contact the U.S. Forest

Service to get up-to-date maps to know what forest roads are open and closed. Banking on GPS systems, he said, could lead drivers to places their vehicles can't handle.

Fire season is going strong, so Roberts said travelers need to take extra precautions not to start a blaze. Don't park, for example, where hot exhaust pipes can brush against dry grass. People also need to be aware of their surroundings.

"Know you way out from where you are at," he said. "Have an escape plan and escape route."



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