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WINNER OF THE 2017 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50

CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION BILL

Hermiston Chamber gets \$1 million, jail doesn't

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Umatilla County Jail better accommodate mentally ill inmates.

"Needless to say, I'm disappointed," Sheriff Terry Rowan said.

Rowan had testified before the Joint Ways and Means Committee's capital construction subcommittee last week, asking for \$1 million to upgrade the jail

in Pendleton to create new holding, booking and storage areas that would allow the jail to serve inmates suffering a mental health crisis or under the influence of drugs. But the project didn't make the cut as the bill headed to the House and Senate floors, where it was expected to pass Saturday night or Sunday.

Hermiston, on the other

hand, will get \$1 million for what is described as the "Hermiston Chamber of Commerce & Western Umatilla County Community Facility."

In a news release, Rep. Greg Smith of Heppner said the new facility will provide space for community meetings, education and workforce development

training events, as well as the headquarters of the chamber of commerce.

"The growing communities of western Umatilla County continue to need additional meeting and workforce development training space, and I believe this facility will help meet that need," he said in a statement. "I am also excited

this facility can serve as a new home for the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce as they continue their work in supporting local business and community activities."

After a months-long search the chamber moved to a smaller space in the Cornerstone Plaza on South Highway 395 in January
See CAPITAL/10A

Fortresses of learning

Schools update buildings, install security systems and train staff, but also offer tip line for students to report problems they see.

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

The crowd jostled into the upper building at Pendleton High School to see the Thursday afternoon basketball game. School officials locked doors and blocked off hallways to keep spectators in the gym and adjoining foyer and out of the rest of the school where class was in session. The armed school resource officer hovered around the scene.

No one checked bags or purses. There were no metal detectors, no pat downs. Admittance was the price of a ticket purchased from a volunteer.

As schools consider how to prevent access to those looking to do harm, the amount and means of security has become a driving question. Some schools, including Pendleton High School, have used money from taxpayer-supported bonds to add fencing, cameras and buzz-in systems.

Mark Mulvihill is the superintendent of the InterMountain Education Service District serving schools in Umatilla, Morrow, Union and Baker counties. Schools are among the safest places for children, he said, and as common as school shootings seem, they remain rare.

"But when it does happen, the trauma is permanent," he said. "An active shooter event is the worst trauma event."

Preventing a tragedy

Oregon schools have had their share of that trauma. The 1998 shooting at Thurston High School, Springfield, left two dead and 23 wounded, and the 2015 shooting at Umpqua Community College, Roseburg, left 10 dead and nine injured.

That shooting sparked Mulvihill and Pendleton Police Chief Stuart



Pendleton High School students head for a security gate as they leave school Friday in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Safe at school

Through the month of March, the EO will report on many ways schools protect students, both on and off campus.

Roberts to examine how local schools could become harder

targets. Roberts toured schools and assessed them for safety, including the ESD buildings and early learning center in Hermiston. Mulvihill said Roberts spotted problems that school staff, teachers and students took for granted as part of their landscape.

Clear glass in windows lets anyone see in. Not all doors lock. And cubby holes near the main entrance are dangerous — anyone could stuff a bomb in one.

Roberts' assessment forced districts to look at buildings and take practical steps toward more

safety. The ESD, Mulvihill said, immediately put in tinted glass at its own offices, installed a door buzz-in system, placed surveillance cameras in better locations, and got rid of the cubbies. The audit, as Mulvihill put

See FORTRESS/10A

HERMISTON

Local access roads cause funding dilemma for maintenance



A truck drives around the potholes in the middle of East McKinney Avenue on Tuesday in Hermiston.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Property owners carry pothole burden on public road

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Everyone agrees that the potholes on East McKinney Avenue are huge. They don't agree on what to do about it.

The road — located in the county on the southern edge of Hermiston — is considered by the county as a "local access road," meaning it's not a county, state, federal or city road but the public has the right to use it.

The question is what happens when it needs major maintenance.

Umatilla County says it's the neighboring property owners' responsibility to fund the filling of the potholes

themselves. But property owners along the road say that law is meant for roads off the beaten path and accessed mostly by residents. East McKinney Avenue, which connects Southeast Fourth Street with South First Street, sees significant traffic from Union Pacific Railroad employees and locals who are trying to skip past the high school traffic or take a shortcut home from Safeway. All of that creates wear and tear that nine property owners are expected to shoulder the bill for.

"It doesn't seem fair," said Roe Gardner, one of East McKinney Avenue's residents.

See POTHOLE/9A



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