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142nd Year, No. 104 WINNER OF THE 2017 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD One dollar



Jeff Kohl, owner of Advanced Commercial Flooring out of Richland, uses a roller to set flooring in the main room at the Harkenrider Center on Monday in Hermiston.

Finishing touches

With parking lot and kitchen equipment still in the works, senior center move-in delayed

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

The Harkenrider Center building is almost complete, but Hermiston seniors will have to wait until August or September before they can move in.

Commercial kitchen equipment and other furnishings will be installed once the building is finished in April, and city manager Byron Smith said the city can't work on creating the extensive parking area planned for the center until the construction site around the building is cleaned up.

"We need to do parking improvements, and we need to get the construction guys out of the way before we can do that," he said at the start of a tour given to the city council Monday night.

Before the tour Willard Fordice, the director for the senior center, told the *East Oregonian* that the



Hermiston Senior Center director Willard Fordice talks about the new facilities during a tour of the Harkenrider Center by the Hermiston City Council on Monday in Hermiston.

seniors had been hoping to start having meals at the center during the spring or summer after moving all of their equipment and furniture in, but once the decision was made to wait to do the parking lot until the building was done, the opening date was moved back for safety reasons.

"We can't bring seniors across the muddy parking lot," he said.

When complete, the single-level parking lot with a bus drop-off and extra handicapped spaces will stretch through what is currently Ridgeway Avenue and the crumbling upper and lower lots behind the Hermiston Public Library.

While Fordice said the seniors have been waiting a long time for the new building, the good news is they will have lots to put in it once

it is complete. They have been successful in securing grants for equipment to fill the large commercial kitchen, and are working on more grants for other types of furnishings and improvements.

"Everything has come through so far," he said.

Fordice joked that the equipment from the old center was so old it "came over on the Mayflower" and should have been replaced years ago. Now the group will have new refrigerators, freezers, stoves and a commercial dishwasher to handle the senior center's twice-a-week meals and other events.

After the old senior center was torn down as part of the sale of the former fairgrounds on Orchard Avenue to Hermiston School District, most of what was inside was put into storage. The seniors will soon begin sorting through to see what will be re-used in the new building and sell the rest in a yard sale.

The new building is 7,000 square feet, with a 4,000 square foot unfinished daylight basement. During Monday's tour, city recreation director Brandon Artz

See SENIOR/8A

More inside: The Hermiston City Council voted Monday to accept full ownership of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, signing an agreement with former co-owners Umatilla County. For more, see Page 8A.



Visitors to the Pendleton Gun Show check out the wares Saturday at the Pendleton Convention Center. The event is the largest gun show in Eastern Oregon, according to its organizer, and raises money for the Pendleton City Club. For more, see Page 3A.

Schools plan for student walkout

Pendleton, Hermiston offer guidelines for nationwide protest

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

On Wednesday at 10 a.m., students across the country will walk out of classrooms for 17 minutes on the one-month anniversary of one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history.

Local school officials are taking different approaches to the protest.

Pendleton High School Principal Dan Greenough said he met with school staff to discuss the issue last week and devised an alternative activity. On Monday, teachers read a script to students explaining their rationale.

"While we do not want to discourage remembrance activities for the horrific events in Florida, we as a school should promote something that may make a positive difference moving forward," the script states. "While a walkout brings attention to the situation, it generally has little to no lasting effect. As a replacement for this activity, we are proposing an alternative. What we would like to suggest is that in place of walking out, all students at Pendleton High School take action to promote the feeling of community here in the school."

As a part of "What's Your 17?" campaign, students will be shown a video in their classrooms

See WALKOUT/8A

PENDLETON Students oppose ag teacher's resignation

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Students and parents packed the boardroom at the Pendleton School District central office to protest the resignation of Seely Daniels, the Pendleton High School agriculture instructor and FFA adviser.

During an emotionally charged board meeting Monday, most of the audience members used the public comment platform to persuade the superintendent and the school board to reverse their decision to accept Daniels' resignation.

The board unanimously voted at its March 6 board meeting to accept that resignation, effective June 15. But multiple students and Daniels said she didn't have a choice but to resign.

Following the meeting, Superintendent Chris Fritsch declined to comment on the details surrounding Daniels' resignation.

The students who spoke before the board characterized Daniels as a teacher who went above and beyond for her students, sparked interest in agriculture and guided them through tough times.

They also voiced frustration

See TEACHER/8A

