

Market: Once canceled but now back on for summer

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Even after a plan was put in place to host the market elsewhere this year, some vendors were still upset.

“We are disappointed,” said Krieg Mueller and John Finley, of Third Generation Farms. “Mr. Myers’ plan was the best plan going forward to make for a successful market. We will have to re-evaluate our plans to join the Hermiston market this year which will not be an easy decision to make.”

Many on social media expressed disappointment in the situation.

Richard Price told the *East Oregonian* he was moving his family from Spokane to Hermiston in June because he wanted to raise his children in a smaller town, and said he had been highly disappointed to see posts online that the farmers market had been canceled. He called farmers markets exactly the type of livability he was looking for in moving to a small town.

“Those are one of the things that’s a foundation of a small town, is a farmers market, and you’re sitting right there in an agricultural area,” he said.

Before the announcement of the market being resurrected by the city, he said it seemed that people involved just needed to sit down “as grownups” and work something out.

Hermiston litigation
Myers has announced he intends to sue the city over what he sees is unfair treatment of his projects by city building official Chuck



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Work continues on Hermiston’s new festival street in front of city hall, which will be the new home of the Hermiston Farmers Market.

Woolsey, which Myers believes is motivated by personal dislike.

Brent Smith, attorney for Mitco, sent a tort claim notice to Woolsey, permit technician Heidi Wilson, mayor David Drotzmann and city attorney Gary Luisi dated March 2.

It stated that Mitco intended to sue the city’s building department for a stop-work order on another Mitco project at 338 N. First Place. Smith said Mitco and its legal team are now considering how to proceed to court, in light of the additional stop-work order on the pavilion site issued last week.

As a result of the involvement of attorneys, assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the city couldn’t respond to Myers’ claims of unfair treatment. Drotzmann said in an email that he also could not discuss the pending litigation, but did say that it was unfortunate that it had caused a disruption to the farmers market

“As we have always done in the past, the city would be happy to work with the vendors and businesses that wish to continue to have a farmers market or other downtown events in a location owned by the city until which time Mr. Myers’

issues are resolved,” he wrote, referencing the city’s previous support of the market in various locations and adding that the city looked forward to “continuing our long and positive relationship” with vendors.

If a lawsuit does proceed, it would not be the first time Myers sued the city of Hermiston. In 2009 his business Nookie’s Bar & Grill filed a \$1.5 million lawsuit against the city and Hermiston Police Department.

According to *East Oregonian* articles at the time, Myers alleged that the police department was unfairly singling out his business and exaggerating police reports connected to the address in an attempt to get its liquor license revoked.

A federal judge dismissed the lawsuit and Nookie’s lost the appeal.

In the current case, Smith said Woolsey seemed to be holding Mitco to a higher standard than other developers after Myers said he and Woolsey argued over an unrelated project.

“A building inspector has discretion, but a building inspector can’t just pick on someone and cause them delay and not do so for anyone else, and not do so for reasons of health and safety,” Smith said.

In the case of the former coal bin building at 388 N. First Place, Smith said the renovation project was being done as a design-build, meaning that the design and building process are integrated instead of creating a set of plans before starting work.

He said Woolsey stopped work when the project was nearly complete and said

Mitco needed to submit plans, even though many other projects around Hermiston have operated under a design-build process.

In the case of the Maxwell Pavilion, Smith provided a copy of a notice from the building department after the stop-work order that lists 12 comments concerning things Mitco needs to provide the building department, including plans for restrooms, door latches and exit signage before the building department begins a plan review.

Myers says he does not plan to have walls, doors or restrooms on the shade structure.

In both cases, Myers also makes other allegations about Woolsey purposely slowing up the process and adding unnecessary roadblocks.

SWARM: Residents near Arlington are working to prevent another invasion

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“Everyone has to do their part to prevail against this infestation,” she said.

Mormon crickets are not actually crickets, but flightless members of the katydid family, closely related to grasshoppers and crickets. Their name comes from the Mormon settlers in Utah, who encountered the pests while pushing westward in the 1800s.

The insects can grow up to 2-3 inches long, emerging in the springtime and undergoing seven stages of development — known as instars — before reaching adulthood, usually after 60-90 days.

Jordan Maley, OSU Extension agent for Gilliam County, said hatchlings began to surface roughly a month and a half ago, and it will be several weeks before adults are on the move.

“They consume anything that is in their path,” Maley said, highlighting the risk to agriculture.

Mormon cricket populations are cyclical, though longtime Arlington resident and rancher Dick Krebs claimed it was the worst infestation since 1942. A public meeting was called in June 2017 to deal with the nightmare, though by that time it was too late.

Instead, Maley said they turned their attention to the next year, plotting a comprehensive strategy to keep the pesky bugs at bay.

“We’re doing whatever it takes to get these things under control,” he said.

Using Google Maps, landowners and townspeople have been able to report sightings of Mormon crickets right from their smartphones. Workers from ODA have also spent the last two weeks scouting for crickets on the hilly rangeland surrounding town.

The highest concentrations of crickets seem to be about a mile west of Arlington in Jones Canyon, Maley said. In some cases, the crickets are “too numerous to count accurately,” as many as 200 per square yard.

By mapping the hot spots for Mormon crickets, Maley said they can make the best use of their limited resources.

“We’re just trying to make sure we’re being effective,” he said.

Outside city limits, the county has agreed to pay \$105,000 for an aerial applicator to spray Dimilin, a pesticide that targets younger, smaller crickets and inhibits their growth.

Charlie Anderson, a wheat farmer up Blalock Canyon, was hit especially hard by last year’s infestation, as crickets devastated 50 acres on the outskirts of his fields. He was the first to conduct aerial spraying around his property on April 24, and so far the treatments appear to be working.

“Those crickets are gone,” Anderson said. “There’s not a sign of them.”

Once the Mormon crickets become adults and Dimilin is no longer effective, Maley said they will begin applying 4,000 pounds of grainy Sevin bait, donated by the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, to kill the oncoming swarm.

In town, residents are already spraying Tempo, a general use insecticide that is considered safe to use around children and pets. The city of Arlington and Gilliam County also joined together to bring in a herd of goats to eat overgrown grass on steep, tricky hillsides where crickets might hide.

To prevail against the infestation, Aamodt said everyone is going to have to do their part.

“I do think that people are working together,” she said. “I receive phone calls and messages every single day.”

Maley said it is unrealistic to think they will solve the problem in one year, but is optimistic they are on the right track.

“We had that outbreak last summer, which was really horrendous and pretty much ruined the summer for Arlington,” he said. “We got organized, and I think we’re going to put a dent in it this year.”



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