

**HERMISTON**



Photo courtesy Hermiston School District

About 20 people gathered Thursday night at the first public meeting held by the facility planning committee, which is studying capital issues facing the district.

# Creative approaches suggested for school facilities challenges

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**  
East Oregonian

Though they haven't made any decisions yet, the Hermiston School District has heard from community members: To pass a new bond, they're going to have to think differently.

About 20 people gathered Thursday night at the first public meeting held by the facility planning committee, a group of community members, school board members and district administrators. In January, the group began studying building issues facing the district, such as enrollment and capacity, school safety, and the condition of facilities.

The committee is looking at potential projects at four

schools: new buildings for Rocky Heights and Highland Hills elementary schools, and making upgrades at Sandstone Middle School and Hermiston High School.

The committee said they hope input from the public will inform the next bond proposal.

Committee members said they had spent the past few months reviewing the problems with the previous bond, which failed in May 2017.

That \$104 million bond proposed new buildings for Rocky Heights and Highland Hills, a new elementary school and significant upgrades and expansions to the high school.

District Operations Director Brad Wayland said voters did not want to see taxes increase, but were also unsure

that they wanted to vote for the specific projects the bond would have addressed. Many also said they felt there was a lack of communication from the district.

Many citizens present at Thursday's meeting said they understood the need to rebuild both elementary schools, but asked the district to think about other options.

"What about using the middle school as an elementary school, and building a new middle school?" Asked one audience member, noting that the middle school could hold more students.

"When you have no money, you have to get creative."

Wayland said they had considered that option, but doing so would create more issues — especially because the school would have been

built for older students.

Another suggested that the district could build two-story elementary schools. Wayland said the district hopes to keep elementary school populations around 600.

But, as one audience member noted, elementary schools are already pushing that limit.

"What's the point of building a school that's already past capacity by the time it's built?" he asked.

Others said they wanted to see better communication from the district about the bond.

The Facilities Planning Committee is holding another meeting, in Spanish, next Thursday, May 24, at Armand Larive Middle School at 6:30 p.m.

# Forum points to challenges of aging in rural Oregon

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
East Oregonian

A meeting of the minds discussed ways to help rural senior citizens during the 2018 Forum on Aging in Rural Oregon this week.

The conference was Wednesday through Friday at Wildhorse Resort & Casino outside Pendleton. Sessions for participants included supporting caregivers, addressing firearm safety with suicidal patients, telemedicine, adult foster care and oral health for older adults.

Many of the wide-ranging topics covered with health care and social services professionals at the conference are also covered in the State Plan on Aging, which the group discussed Thursday afternoon.

Part of the Older Americans Act, the current State Plan on Aging spans from 2017 to 2021 and is supported by local plans created by Area Agencies on Aging. Deborah McCuin of the State Unit on Aging said the plan becomes increasingly important as America's demographics change.

"Obviously all of you are aware of this fast-growing population of older adults

and increasing number of people with disabilities," she said.

The mission of the plan is to assure Oregonians are able to "safely age in the setting of their choice" in health, independence and dignity.

One component of the plan is nutrition services such as food banks and senior meal programs, which can contribute to seniors' health and independence. Disease prevention and access to preventative measures such as cancer screenings are another, as is addressing the need for affordable housing.

McCuin said family caregiver support services are also becoming increasingly vital as a generation of Americans faces the prospect of caring for children and elderly parents at the same time.

"We really want to increase awareness of these services, and that they're out there," she said.

The best way for people to access such services is through their local Area Agency on Aging, of which there are 17 in Oregon. Umatilla and Morrow counties are covered by the AAA department of CAPECO, based in Pendleton and reached at

541-276-1926.

Thursday afternoon the group also discussed the State Health Improvement Plan with Kirsten Aird of the Oregon Health Authority.

Over the last century, Aird said, public health has been about helping people live longer through everything from immunizations to tobacco prevention. Now, she said, it is important that public health also do more to address the results of increased life expectancy.

"These are all massive improvements that have helped us live longer, and so we're aging," she said.

Aird said the most far-reaching way to improve public health is to tackle socioeconomic factors such as education, racism and poverty. Another important strategy is to change the environment. A person's workplace, for example, can either be set up to push people toward better health or worse.

As people stay in the workforce longer, she said, workplaces are covering multiple generations with "very different cultures." That's something that needs to be addressed, as does the fact that many workers are

also acting as caregivers for children and/or elderly parents at home.

"What does that look like to have public policies to make that successful?" she asked.

The Oregon Health Authority has started a campaign called Place Matters Oregon, which discusses how the place a person lives affects their health. The popularity of the website [www.placemattersoregon.com](http://www.placemattersoregon.com) shows that people are "hungry" for that conversation, Aird said. She said it touches on aging in rural Oregon because many small towns in Oregon are losing services to support seniors as young people migrate elsewhere but older residents don't want to leave their community.

More resources related to aging in rural Oregon can be found online at [www.oregon.gov/DHS/seniors-disabilities](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/seniors-disabilities).

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

# I-84 Pendleton ramps to close intermittently

East Oregonian

The on and off ramps at exits 207 and 209 on Interstate 84 will see intermittent nighttime closures over the next two to three weeks as the Oregon Department of Transportation paves them.

According to an ODOT press release, crews from Roy Houck Construction will start prep work on Monday and Tuesday.

Paving will start on either Wednesday or May 29. Work will take place exclusively between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., and the interchanges won't be closed simultaneously.

When work is occurring on each set of ramps, message boards will be posted on Southgate and U.S. Route 30, alerting the closures and directing traffic to alternate ramps.

# Governor joins CTUIR in opposing Medicaid work requirements for tribes

East Oregonian

In its battle against the Trump Administration over Medicaid work requirements, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation has gained some powerful allies.

In a Friday press release, the tribes announced that Gov. Kate Brown wrote a letter to CTUIR Chairman Gary Burke affirming the tribes' position.

Over the last month, American Indian tribes have sought an exemption from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services after several states introduced work requirements to their Medicaid programs.

The department contends that Native American tribes are a racial group rather than a sovereign government, an argument that defies historical precedent.

"American Indian is a political entity, not an ethnicity," Burke said in a statement. "Clearly, Governor Brown understands our government-to-government relationship and we expect the President of

the United States and his departments to recognize this important distinction and relationship."

Oregon's Medicaid program — Oregon Health Plan — does not impose work requirements on recipients, but Brown said it went beyond that.

"The recommendations are in violation of the rights reserved by CTUIR leaders in the Treaty of 1855," Brown said, "The notion that our state could unilaterally impose work-requirements for tribal members on the Oregon Health Plan is not only legally unsound, it is flatly inconsistent with the government-to-government relationships that we have developed and cherish here in Oregon."

Besides Brown, the CTUIR's position also has the support of Sen. Jeff Merkley and Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River.

Merkley and Walden signed onto separate letters from congressional members to Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar opposing the department's categorization of American Indian tribes.

**'The recommendations are in violation of the rights reserved by CTUIR leaders in the Treaty of 1855.'**

— Gov. Kate Brown

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**LIFE OF THE PARTY (PG13)**  
12:00\* 2:20\* 4:40 7:20 9:40

**AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR (PG13)**  
12:30\* 3:40\* 6:50 10:00

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