

## Railroad

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395, to provide furloughed UP employees with information about what resources will be available to them.

On Tuesday, city manager Byron Smith also told the Hermiston City Council that the city, Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce, Oregon Employment Department and CAPECO are planning to partner on a job fair on June 10. The details are still being planned, he said, but the idea is to have potential employers from the area on hand to discuss job and training opportunities with anyone looking for an employment.

"We anticipate opening it up to everyone, but it will specifically target (former UP employees)," he said.

Councilors expressed concern for the impact the situation was having on families.

Some of the area's larger employers who struggle to stay fully staffed have already been taking advantage of the surge in interest by advertising openings at places such as Two Rivers Correctional Institution. The Port of Morrow created a flier showing 62 different job openings at port businesses.

Not all jobs are created equal when it comes to pay and benefits, however.

Guy Haight of Pendleton saw his last day on the job Saturday. He and his wife Susan Haight said they were worried about what kind of work might be available locally for a 56-year-old machinist.

"We have a mortgage and kids at home," Susan said.

Guy said he didn't even find out he had lost his job directly from UP — he saw information about the layoffs online on his day off. Scores of layoffs over the past six months were rough, he said, but with 19 years seniority he hadn't expected to be one of them.

"We didn't think it would go this far," he said. "We didn't think they would actually shut down the shop."

He said he enjoyed working at Hinkle and would miss his coworkers there.

"There are a lot of good people out there," Susan added. "They don't deserve this."

A flyer being passed around Pendleton recently raised eyebrows, as it advertised a Union Pacific event June 7 to "hear how you can build a future with Union Pacific Railroad."

Tim McMahan, UP spokesman, said the event was for tribal members in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and is "an outreach effort that discusses career paths and best practices for those seeking career opportunities."

## Church: Congregation sells historic church and moves out

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extremely difficult decision to make, but we realize this church is an albatross. It's a beautiful albatross, don't get me wrong, but it's still an albatross."

A Portland real estate investment company named Calibrated Valuation LLC has put down escrow money, said head trustee John Taylor. He expects the sale to close in the next week. Time will tell whether the church will be renovated or razed.

The final service on Sunday seemed ordinary on the face of it. All the elements seemed familiar — hymns, scripture, prayers and a sermon. But things felt far from ordinary. Hearts were breaking.

"This is a difficult thing we're doing today," Pastor Jim Pierce prayed to God in his soft Arkansas drawl. "We need your help."

The 35 people in the pews said, "Amen," then sang "Gather Us In" as organist Judy Jenner accompanied on the church's original 1906 pipe organ.

The service brought a series of lasts at the old church. The last time 11-year-old Talan Anderson would light the candles. The last recitation of The Lord's Prayer. The last benediction. The last time the worshippers would be wrapped in the rich reverberations of the vintage organ.

Pierce took time to define "the church" as not the building, but the believers who gather there.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Church windows glow Sunday during the final service at the Pendleton United Methodist Church.

During the last hymn, Thompson and a few others were too overcome to sing. Tears glistened around the sanctuary.

The worshippers stayed after the last amen as Judy Jenner played one last piece, "All Creatures of our God and King." When she finished, cheers erupted. Jenner took a bow.

Jenner will continue to accompany the services, but on a portable keyboard at Pendleton City Hall, where the group will meet until another spot can be secured. Jenner will miss the old organ.

"The clarity of pipes is

awesome," she said. "I've played pipe organs at other churches, but this is probably the clearest tone."

The church with its distinctive bell tower has dominated the block since the cornerstone was laid in 1906 on land purchased for \$4,000. Stones quarried near Baker cost \$1,500 and bricks from the Weston Brickyard were \$90. The church survived several fires: The first started during a church dinner in 1954 and an arsonist started four separate fires in 1977.

Pierce said the congregation plans to put the money from the sale in

the bank and wait a while before making any dramatic moves. Proceeds of a recent moving sale will also be squirreled away.

The congregation also will soon have to say goodbye to Pierce and his wife Lisa, who have been reassigned to a Methodist church in Philomath. Pastor Patty Nance will start on July 1, shepherding both Pendleton and Hermiston congregations.

Pierce said his little flock is in emotional pain at the moment, but trying to focus on God. In the past weeks, he said, "they just sat in the sanctuary and looked at the

stained glass and the organ like they are planning a funeral."

John Taylor said he and other members know they made the right decision.

"Change is really an opportunity. We're trying to look at it that way. But it's a bitter pill to swallow."

Thompson, who was baptized at the church, couldn't deny her distress.

"There was a part of the service where I was sobbing," she said. "I can't imagine not being here."

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## Budget: General fund seeing 25% increase in PERS costs

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### Capital projects

While Hermiston will continue its investment into new capital improvement projects over the next year, many of the projects slated for 2019-20 will be less visible than recent undertakings such as the new senior center. The city plans to upgrade the computer system that runs its water and sewer system, improve a well and a lift station, replace underground storage tanks and expand the Geer Road water line.

The biggest water-related project continuing into 2019-20 is construction of the city's new 1 million-gallon water tank on Punkin Center, which will boost the city's storage capacity and open up hundreds of acres for development.

On the street side, funds are being put toward an overlay of West Hermiston Avenue, East Theater Lane paving, and design work on the planned realignment of the confusing three-way intersection between Geer, Harper and Umatilla River roads.

### Police department

Changes to the Hermiston Police Department budget signal changes to how officers complete their work.

The department is following a previous move by the rest of the city to lease vehicles from Enterprise instead of purchasing them outright. Edmiston said part of that change will be to increase the number of patrol cars — giving each patrol officer their own vehicle to park at home instead of coming to the police station and using a shared vehicle during their shift.

The new take-home policy will mean fewer marked cars in the police station lot and more parked on streets around the city, where they might inspire people to slow down or think twice about causing trouble in that neighborhood.

"There's going to be enhanced visibility," Edmiston said.

He said the new approach will keep the department from needing to expand its parking lot.

In the past the depart-

ment has budgeted \$94,000 a year to purchase two new vehicles and "upfit" them with the needed equipment. The lease on 10 additional vehicles will come in at \$93,700 a year for now, and Edmiston said they will start saving substantially on that lease five years from now when the department builds up and then uses a reserve account to upfit vehicles instead of folding it into the cost of the lease. Maintenance costs are also included in the agreement with Enterprise.

Capt. Travis Eynon said studies have shown that maintenance costs go down and cars are taken better care of when each patrol officer is assigned their own vehicle.

"People tend to take a little more ownership with the take-home vehicles," he said.

The department is also switching to department-issued cellphones. Instead of sitting in their patrol car entering notes on an in-car computer, then returning to the station to hand over a sim card full of photos for the records department

to upload, officers will be able to input reports and upload photos directly from their phone on an app called iRIMS.

When incidents happen late at night, administrators will be able to log onto the system from anywhere to see reports, GPS locations of all on-duty personnel and other information.

"We can see in real time what's going on instead of having to come in," Edmiston said.

The app came at a one-time cost of \$10,000 and the phones will cost the department about \$2,000 a year, but will take away the need for \$4,000 computers installed in each of the 10 new vehicles.

### Parks and recreation

Hermiston's most high-profile parks project in 2019-20 will be the rebuilding of Funland Park, which burned down earlier this month. Parks and recreation director Larry Fetter said the park was not actually included in the budget the council will look at in two weeks due to timing. Instead, the city will vote

on a supplemental budget later.

"Unfortunately we don't know what the cost will be to replace it, we don't know what the insurance payment will be and we don't know what the gap will be between fundraising and what's needed," he said.

The biggest parks project included in the budget is a skate park, which will be built on North First Street across from the police and fire stations in spring 2020 if the city secures a grant from the state that uses lottery dollars for public parks projects.

The skate park will be Phase I of a "teen adventure park." Phase II, planned for 2021, will add a park-our area, a BMX bike track, rock climbing and other features.

The total cost of the two phases will run about \$1.2 million, but grants are expected to cover about three-fourths of that cost.

The full city budget, which will go before the city council on June 10, can be found online at [hermiston.or.us/finance/budget](http://hermiston.or.us/finance/budget).

## Extension: Phil Hamm stepping down after 29 years at the Hermiston center

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age that one pretty well.

"And then along came beet leafhopper transmitted viruslike agent. I remember when we first knew we had a problem ...," Hamm said.

"So, I asked potato growers to come and meet in our conference room and we tried to find out if there was something that some of them did that others didn't do that helped them get by, and we found that those who treated for another insect in late May/early June had no problems, whereas those who did not, did have problems.

"That was a case where growers came together to help other growers," Hamm said.

"Then there were things like silver scurf," Hamm said. "We didn't know anything about it, and then we found it is seed borne, and we learned how to manage that one."

"Corn smut was a real interesting thing," Hamm said. "I can remember the



Mitch Lies/For the East Oregonian

/Capital Press

Phil Hamm outside the Hermiston Research and Extension Center, where he has served as

first field I found corn smut in. It was a half-circle of sweet corn and I thought it was a novelty. Well, that novelty became a major issue.

"George Clough, the station's research horticulturist at the time, and I started

doing a variety trial and we identified super sweet jubilee and jubilee as being highly susceptible, while some of the newer varieties were not," Hamm said.

"At the time many of the 100,000 acres of sweet corn grown in the basin were

planted to those two varieties. I can tell you that none of that is being grown now."

Part of the legacy Hamm leaves behind at the center are the field days that today are a regular feature of the center. When Hamm started as director in 2005, there

were no field days. Since then, the center has held three to four each year.

The field days provide researchers with an invaluable opportunity to share their findings with growers and field men, Hamm said, and exemplify what Hamm is all about, according to Scott Reed, director of the OSU Extension Service.

"Phil never forgets the E in HAREC (the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center)," Reed said. "And it is a capital E, because to generate new knowledge is one thing, but you need to put knowledge to work."

"Field days or anything we do here is about the growers," Hamm said. "It is not about us. We exist to provide them the information they need to be more successful."

"And it is not like we are sitting here like the Maytag repairman in that old commercial with our feet up on the desk waiting for a phone call. There is always

something. There is always a need."

Hamm leaves behind a center equipped with state-of-the-art laboratories and other facilities that he said were made possible largely because of contributions from the local community.

"Because of so many people that have helped over the last 10 years, this station is situated to move forward in a very positive way," Hamm said.

Hamm said he will miss interacting with growers, attending field days and seeing the center's staff on a day-to-day basis.

"I am certainly going to miss the day-to-day opportunities I have to interact with staff here and the stakeholders that are so much a part of what we serve," Hamm said.

He added that he and his wife, Linda, plan to continue to reside in Hermiston and be an active part of the community. There will be more fishing and hunting involved, however, and less work in his future, he said.