

School district shows off new facilities

Upgrades to Umatilla middle school funded by 2016 school bond

By JESSICA POLLARD
Staff Reporter



Staff photo by Jessica Pollard

Clara Brownell Middle School recently received renovations. The public had a chance to tour the school Friday, which was updated by funds from a \$10.5 million school bond passed in 2016.

UMATILLA — The students at Clara Brownell Middle School can see more clearly since a \$10.5 million 2016 school bond funded the construction of new double-pane tinted windows in classrooms, and much more for the school district.

Umatilla School District Superintendent Heidi Sipe was pleased with the additions to the school.

“The windows are nice,” Sipe said. “Everything else is just what we needed.”

Sipe led a tour of the school Friday, presenting the newly refurbished facilities to the public after a brief luncheon.

The Oregon Energy Trust conducted studies during the remodeling process, which allowed the district to see the long-term projected costs of renovations.

The studies focused on incorporating energy reduction and environmental protection into the new facilities. The process earned the district almost \$70,000 in rebates, which were presented at a check signing and dinner on Friday evening.

The rebates, Sipe said, will in part go toward fixing the air conditioning unit at Umatilla High School, which gave out just days before graduation.

McNary Heights Elementary, CBMS and UHS

all received updated security systems, and updated HVAC systems with direct digital controls as part of the bond. MHES also received a new stand-alone gymnasium, complete with solar panels.

The majority of the changes, however, can be seen at Clara Brownell.

The basis for the reconstruction came from a privately contracted report from the Wenaha Group, a Pendleton-based project management and consulting firm that specializes in education, tribal, public agency and health care projects. The report concluded, ultimately, that while Umatilla High School and McNary Elementary schools were in “fair” or “good” condition, Clara Brownell Middle School was in “poor” condition and required major renovations or replacement.

The doors and windows, which were initially described by the report as “exceptionally inefficient and in poor condition,”

have been replaced to provide better natural light and insulation.

The plumbing and heating systems called for a revamp.

After digging through 6 inches of concrete to reach the plumbing system at CBMS, the school has been outfitted. Students will now have regular handwashing sinks in the bathrooms, which are replacing foot pump troughs.

Ron West, who does maintenance at CBMS, proudly opened the door to a room which used to hold an old finicky boiler. Now, it’s just a storage closet. With a window, in case it ever becomes an office. West will no longer have to maintain the boiler at the school.

The chimney on CBMS, which served as a landmark in some ways, according to Sipe, was taken down due to seismic concerns.

Other upgrades funded by the bond include new sound-reducing rubber

flooring in classrooms, and hallway floors painted to look like the confluence of the Umatilla River.

The bond was the first passed in the district since 1998 when Umatilla High School was constructed.

In 2006, a \$6.5 million bond was proposed to help construct a new Clara Brownell school building. The bond was defeated 510-436, according to a 2006 article published in the *Hermiston Herald*.

Again in 2008, under the new leadership of Sipe, another bond was proposed which would help alleviate overcrowding at McNary Elementary School by building 14 new classrooms as well as four modular classrooms at Clara Brownell.

The potential to pass the bond seemed promising when 46% of voters claimed they would “fully or somewhat” support a school bond that May.

But, due to what Sipe believes were economic stressors caused by job layoffs, the bond failed. The district forged onward with the renovations, using \$2.2 million in district funds.

“This time we knew not to ask for any more,” Sipe said.

As Sipe walked the tour out from the CBMS cafeteria Friday afternoon, she pointed out to a patch of ceiling they couldn’t afford to repair during renovations.

Twenty or so years from now, Sipe hopes that another bond could pass. This time, possibly to aid the construction of a K-2 building on a plot of land owned by the school district on South Hill.

LOCAL BRIEFING

State Recreation Area campground to close for weekend

ELGIN — The campground at Minam State Recreation Area, near Elgin, will be closed June 14-15 while contractors perform construction work on the park’s campground road. The 22-site campground is expected to reopen by 6 p.m. June 15.

Park rangers are asking campers to vacate the campground by 4 p.m. on June 13 to accommodate the construction work. Campers can move back into the campground any time after 6 p.m. June 15.

Mac Freeborn, park manager, says the road construction will repair the effects of weather and heavy visitor use.

“Minam is a popular local campground and the campground road has some wear and tear issues,” he said. “These repairs should improve the road conditions and help prevent future degradation.”

Minam State Recreation Area is a first-come, first-served primitive campground located two miles north of Highway 82, near the confluence of the Minam and Walla Rivers.

Boardman hosts rabies clinic

BOARDMAN — Dr. James Burgess of Country Animal Hospital in Hermiston is teaming up with the city of Boardman to help pet owners in keeping their cats and dogs current on vaccinations.

A low-cost clinic is planned for Saturday, June 22 from 10 a.m. to noon at Boardman City Park. Residents can get rabies vaccinations for their dogs and cats at a cost of \$20 each. In addition, people can have their dogs licensed at no charge during the clinic. All dog owners living in the city of Boardman are required to license their dogs for identification purposes.

For more information, call Jose Fernandez, Boardman animal control officer, at 541-481-9252.

City council to vote on 2019-20 budget Monday

HERMISTON — The Hermiston City Council will vote Monday on its budget for 2019-20.

The budget includes money for water and sewer projects, paving East Theater Lane, placing an overlay on West Hermiston Avenue and building a skate park next summer. It also includes money for increased patrol cars in the

police department so that officers can park patrol vehicles at home, and a 2.75% cost of living increase for city staff.

Monday’s regular 7 p.m. meeting will be preceded by a 6 p.m. work session for the city to continue to discuss its strategic plan for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

After the regular business meeting the council will adjourn and reconvene as the Hermiston Urban Renewal Agency in order to pass the agency’s 2019-20 budget. The budget includes money for new wayfinding signage and landscaping downtown.

The council meets at city hall, 180 N.E. Second St. The agenda packet, including the full budget, can be found online at hermiston.or.us/meetings.

Public meeting scheduled in Dayton to discuss projects

PENDLETON — The Pomeroy and Walla Walla Ranger Districts of the Umatilla National Forest will host a public meeting at the Delaney Room in the Dayton Memorial Library in Dayton, Washington, from 6:30-8 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting is to share information with local communities about the districts’ planned project activities for the 2019 field season.

Pomeroy District Ranger Monte Fujishin, Walla Walla District Ranger Mike Rassbach, and district employees will host the meeting to talk about upcoming forest management activities planned for the summer including projects in timber, fire and fuels, recreation and range.

“I know the Umatilla National Forest is important to our communities and there is a lot of interest in the Forest Service completing important work to improve forest conditions,” Fujishin said. “We look forward to talking with community members about all the work we have planned and to hear what’s on people’s minds.”

Umatilla’s budget signals changes to downtown

Theme of city’s 2019-20 budget is accommodating recent growth spurt

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

UMATILLA — Downtown Umatilla is getting a facelift.

City Manager David Stockdale said the city’s 2019-20 budget passed this week includes money for several projects that could improve the look of the city’s main drag.

“We really anticipate seeing some fantastic changes to Umatilla’s downtown area,” he said.

The biggest project is a \$6.1 million reconstruction of Sixth Street where it passes through the city. More than \$5 million of the funding comes from grants from the Oregon Department of Transportation.

The new street will include bulb-outs, stamped concrete, new lighting and other features intended to not only beautify downtown but also help signal to Highway 730 travelers that they are

passing through a community and need to slow down.

The city is also putting additional funding toward its facade grant program. The previous program limited applicants to \$10,000 and required a 50% match, but this year the city hopes to boost the number of applicants by awarding up to \$26,500 and only requiring a 25% match.

Umatilla recently purchased the former post office building next to city hall, and in the coming months the city will spend \$750,000 on the building to turn it into the Umatilla Business Center.

Community development department staff will have their offices there, and space in the front of the building will become a “business incubator” where brand new businesses can enjoy heavily subsidized rent as they get off the ground. A large multipurpose room will host workforce development activities during the day and recreational activities, such as yoga, in the evenings.

The city has increased its event budget for 2019-20 to \$100,000 in order

to start a few new family-friendly events. It is also starting its first parks and recreation program, overseen by a new recreation manager. The city will add restrooms to Kiwanis park.

Stockdale said the theme of Umatilla’s 2019-20 budget is accommodating the city’s recent growth spurt. Additional money has been set aside for repairs to streets and sidewalks. New staff are being added to handle increased activity in planning and building. The city will also do repair work on its backup emergency generators to ensure it will be able to continue running its water and sewer systems in the event of a long power outage.

The city is also extending a wastewater line for a project that will take recycled water used for cooling data centers in the area and send it to West Irrigation District for agricultural use.

One thing that isn’t in the budget is a new pedes-

trian bridge across the Umatilla River behind the high school. The previous bridge is unusable after partially collapsing during spring flooding.

Stockdale said it looks like the city will be able to keep some parts of the bridge, but the project will still cost more than \$1 million due to the type of equipment needed to handle mid-stream construction. While Stockdale expects insurance and FEMA to cover about \$850,000, the city hasn’t come up with a plan yet to fund the additional \$250,000 or more needed to complete the project.

LIVE MUSIC

9:00 PM

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SAT, JUNE 8

Elwood

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Cineplex Show Times

\$5 Classic Movie

Showing Wednesday at 12PM
WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

Dark Phoenix (PG13)
2D 1:20p* 4:00p 7:10p
[D] 9:50p

The Secret Life of Pets 2 (PG)
2D 2:30p* 4:40p 6:50p
[D] 12:20p* 9:10p

Godzilla: King of the Monsters (PG13)
12:50p* 3:40p* 6:30p 9:20p

Rocketman (R)
1:40p* 4:20p 7:00p 9:40p

Aladdin (PG)
1:00p* 3:50p* 6:40p 9:30p

Men in Black: International (PG13)
Thursday, June 13th • 7:00p

* Matinee Pricing
wildhorseresort.com • 541-966-1850
Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216

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