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Hermiston Board of Education endorses bond proposal

\$82.7 million measure to be placed on November ballot

By JESSICA POLLARD
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Board of Education unanimously approved a recommendation on Monday night to put an \$82.7 million bond measure on the ballot this November.

The proposed bond would fund a number of projects, including the replacement of Rocky Heights Elementary School with a larger capacity building on the same property and the construction of a new elementary school on property owned by the district on Theater Lane.

The bond would also fund a multi-use annex for Hermiston High School, further elementary school improvements and be used to purchase more property to address projected student capacity.

According to the Hermiston School District website, the Facility Planning Committee estimated the elementary schools would exceed capacity by the 2020-21 school year and Hermiston High School by this coming school year.

“With support from our residents, we’ll be able to keep up with the growing demand for classroom space and maintain quality instruction at each of our campuses,” said Board of Education Chair Karen Sherman.

A recent press release issued by the school district stated that the bond wouldn’t raise property taxes, and that taxpayers can expect to keep the \$0.40 reduction per \$1,000 assessed value which took effect when the district paid off its pre-2008 debt last month.

The district’s last bond proposal, which was rejected by voters in 2017, was for \$104 million dollars.

“Even though we were unsuccessful last time,” said Vice Chair of the Board of Education Josh Goller, “the need is still there.”



Greg Red Elk competes during the golden age competition at the 25th Wildhorse Pow Wow Sunday afternoon. Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

WILDHORSE POW WOW ENTERS 25 YEARS

By BEN LONERGAN
East Oregonian

MISSION—Dancers dressed in colorful regalia and ceremonial clothing spread across the lawn at the start of the 25th anniversary of the annual Wildhorse Pow Wow as the air filled with the sound of drums and singing.

As dancers made their way around the circle to the beat of the drums, the voice of Jerry Meninick boomed across the loudspeaker to announce upcoming competitions. Meninick, a longtime announcer for the event, has witnessed the growth and resilience of the pow wow since its first years.

“The vision of the event was to help others, and in that, I believe we have succeeded,” he said. “I feel as though the dreams have

been realized for the people here.”

From the rather humble beginnings of the event, the number of competitors has grown while winnings have swelled to more than \$90,000 in cash and prizes.

This year’s host drum, Sharp Shooter, from St. Paul, Minnesota, led off the drumming rotation followed by a variety of competition drums representing tribes from the United States and Canada. Drums traded off for each dance competition as the afternoon continued.

Dancers of all ages were given the opportunity to compete in a variety of competitions, including traditional, fancy, golden age, chicken and jingle dances. Between competitions, intertribal dances welcomed tribal members of all ages and genders to dance together and express their individual styles.

For many competitors, and for the spectators, the event was not just about the prizes. Chaska John, 17, and his younger brother Jason, 4, of Yakima, Washington, have been competing in the event for as long as they can remember.

“It’s simple, I came to see family and dance; it’s cool to see the same people every year, and watch them grow,” John said. “I don’t think anything has changed, and that’s what I love about it.”

In addition to the dance and drum competitions, traveling vendors served a variety of traditional foods and Native American arts and crafts.

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Owners reach deal for sale of Hamley businesses

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The sun could be setting on the court battles over all things Hamleys.

Blair Woodfield and Parley Pearce have been locked in a legal dispute to split their ownership of the iconic Hamley western store, steak house and related ventures in downtown Pendleton. Woodfield put a stick in the spokes of that process in 2018 when he declared bankruptcy to prevent an auction. But a June 17 court filing in the case states Woodfield and Pearce are ready to let it go.

“The Partners having negotiated are now in agreement to liquidate the Hamleys holdings in Pendleton and to otherwise wind up all their jointly owned LLCs in an orderly manner,” according to the motion and notice to settle. To accomplish that, Woodfield, Pearce and their main creditor, Idaho-based HIPO, a limited liability company, “agreed to hold an auction sale for all the Hamleys assets.”

Woodfield in 2016 tried to work a deal from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation near Pendleton to buy the Hamley companies for \$2 million, but Pearce never agreed to that.

Under the terms of the new deal, HIPO offered \$2.5 million for the four limited liability companies that control Hamley businesses. The offer is good for 10 days for Woodfield’s approval, then would drop to \$2 million and face “potential overbids.” Anyone wishing to bid more than \$2 million would have to put it in writing and give it to HIPO’s lawyer, Britta Warren of Portland. Bidders proving they can make good on the cash within eight days meet at her office for an auction lasting four hours.

Any party submitting a qualified overbid, according to the filing, can attend the auction, along with Woodfield, Pearce, HIPO’s representative and the lawyers.

The sale of the Hamley assets to HIPO or the highest bidder shall close within 10 days of the bankruptcy court approving the agreement or within eight days after the end of the auction.

The deal does not set a date for the auction. That could come during the confirmation

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Merkley fields questions in Boardman

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

BOARDMAN — Concern for children in America’s classrooms, homes and border security permeated discussion at a town hall with Sen. Jeff Merkley in Boardman on Saturday.

The senator advocated for more education funding, more early childhood education opportunities and changes in the way the country

handles minors crossing the southern border in response to several questions from a crowd of about two dozen people at the SAGE Center.

Doctors and lawyers with access to child detention centers at the border have described young children packed into facilities without access to clean clothes, soap, toothbrushes, sleeping mats and other items. One town hall attendee described the government’s treatment of unaccompanied minors and those taken

from their parents as an “abomination” and asked Merkley what Congress and everyday citizens can do.

Merkley said he was deeply troubled by the reports and what he had seen in his own visits to the border, including a former Walmart that had been built to house 300 boys but instead held 1,500. He said the for-profit businesses that run the detention facilities on behalf of the government were paid \$750 per child per day, giving them no incentive to

find placements with family or foster homes.

“They have every incentive to keep kids in there as long as they can,” he said.

He advocated for a return of the Family Case Management Program, which assigned caseworkers to families who were considered low flight risks and helped them get set up with housing and other necessities

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