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EAST OREGONIAN

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\$2.00

PENDLETON

Council proposes fees, gas tax to fix roads

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton City Council has sketched out a roadmap to generate an extra \$1 million for road funding, but some parts of the plan will take longer to execute than others.

After deliberating for a little less than an hour, the council agreed to a multi-layered plan.

- A 4-cent gas tax with a 10-year sunset

- A \$2 hotel room fee
- A \$3 increase to the street utility fee
- An additional \$110,000 from the general fund

The council also endorsed the idea of a large event ticket fee, but Mayor John Turner said it might not be implemented for a year or more as the city creates a committee to study the issue.

The council will aim to put the gas tax on the May ballot with the hope that it will be more success-

ful than the 2015 gas tax proposal, which was defeated handily.

The hotel room fee has an interesting wrinkle because the state requires 70% of lodging fees go toward tourism promotion while the other 30% can go in the general fund, the city's only discretionary fund.

City Attorney Nancy Kerns said the city can work around that by using the lodging fee to pay for a "tourism facility," like the Pendleton Aquatic Center.

This would free up general fund money for streets that would normally go toward a recreational use.

The hotel room fee has been opposed by multiple, local hoteliers and the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association, the industry's statewide lobbying organization.

Under the council's suggestion, the \$3 increase in the street utility fee would be on a sliding scale based on poverty level. Councilor

Dale Primmer was in favor of making it completely forgivable for low-income households.

The rest of the new street funding would either come through cuts or fee increases in the general fund.

Mayor John Turner said he would like City Manager Robb Corbett to come back next week with a proposal the council could formally vote on. The next regular council meeting is scheduled for Dec. 3.

Hermiston council OKs first step for subdivision

Project would turn 36 acres into multi-use neighborhood

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Hermiston City Council approved an annexation and zoning changes Monday that could transform the northeast entrance to town.

Developers Lloyd and Lois Piercy of Hat Rock, who have completed projects around Hermiston in the past and helped revitalize downtown Echo, hope to turn 36 acres at the intersection of Elm Avenue and Diagonal Road into a multi-use neighborhood.

Their vision includes 25 acres of "moderate" single family homes, plus walking trails, a few "neighborhood" businesses, such

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STILL GOING STRONG



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Amanda Terry stocks wet/dry vacuums at Smitty's Ace Hardware in Hermiston on Tuesday afternoon. Heading into the holiday season, the retailer expects to see a similar number of customers as recent years.

Despite some concerns, Oregon's economy remains strong heading into the holiday season

By JAKE THOMAS, SAPHARA HARRELL AND SAM STITES
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — It's a good time to be a holiday shopper in Oregon.

Despite fears of a recession earlier this year, Oregon's economy remains stronger than much of the country. Unlike a decade ago, when the economy was reeling from a recession, Oregonians have jobs and money. That puts them in a better position to be generous this holiday season.

Hovering at 4%, the state's unemployment rate is at historic lows. Oregon had the second-fastest growing median income in 2018. At 13%, Oregon's poverty rate is below the national rate and the lowest since 2000.

"We're in unprecedented times right now," said John Tapogna, president and economist at Portland-based consulting firm ECONorthwest. "We're in the

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Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Customers pass through the checkout lines at Smitty's Ace Hardware in Hermiston on Tuesday evening.

Due to the postal holiday, there will be no newspaper delivered on Thursday.

CHI St. Anthony Hospital

Winter Fest

Celebrate THE Spirit OF INSPIRED GIVING

Friday DECEMBER 6th, 2019
Evening Gala | 6:00 pm

Saturday DECEMBER 7th, 2019
Family Day | 10am-2pm

LOCATED AT THE Pendleton Convention Center

For more information or to purchase tickets: sahp Pendleton.org/winterfest or 541-278-2627

