



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan  
The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners approved a contract with Uni-Tech Communications on Jan. 15 to upgrade security measures at the Umatilla County Courthouse.

# Umatilla County upgrades security systems

Commissioners approve \$100,000 system upgrade

By ALEX CASTLE  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County’s security system is getting an upgrade. The board of commissioners approved a \$100,000 system upgrade and access control expansion for the county courthouse, maintenance building, justice center and Stafford Hansell Government Center on Jan. 15. The upgrade will replace the current system that runs on Windows XP, which Microsoft stopped supporting in 2014, along with reducing the number of keys handed out to employees and replacing them with access fobs.

“Now if an employee loses a key, we don’t have to worry about tracking it down or changing out all the locks,” Commissioner John Shafer said. County employees currently have external access to the courthouse, justice center and government center with a fob, while internal doors still require keys. Beyond being a security risk, a lost employee key requires the access points to be rekeyed, whereas fobs can simply be deactivated if lost. For the project, the county contracted Uni-Tech Communications, which did the initial security system installation back in 2000. The county previously approved major upgrades to its systems in 2007 and

2010 and has periodically replaced and updated its cameras. The upgrades altogether are projected to cost \$99,850.56 but were budgeted a total of \$100,000. The county is shooting to complete the project this fiscal year, Shafer said, and had previously budgeted for the project. The upgrade is a part of larger security improvements to the courthouse that Shafer is hoping to make in his first year as county chair. According to Shafer, the county isn’t even on the state’s list of over 2,000 projects to receive funding for a new courthouse. But after the state didn’t even distribute any funds for upgrades last year, Shafer is hoping to secure some this year to complete a project that would

move the courthouse’s security checkpoint from the second to the first floor. The board of commissioners also authorized the issuance of bids on Wednesday for its construction project of Airport and Ott roads near the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston. The project’s goal is to widen Airport Road and construct turn lanes into EOTEC, Shafer said, which will ease traffic congestion during the center’s large events, such as the Umatilla County Fair. Shafer said the county is now accepting proposals for the project, which will then be reviewed and evaluated. “We’ll take a look over them and see where we can get the most bang for our buck,” he said.

# Hermiston Warming Station struggles to find volunteers

More than 100 people trained, but many haven’t signed up for shifts

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Some people slept out in the cold on Sunday night after the Hermiston Warming Station did not have enough volunteers to open. It was the second time that happened since the season started at the end of November. “People get quite upset, but I have to explain to them that nobody gets paid,” board chair Teesie Hill said. “We’re all volunteers.” Hill said the warming station trained a little over 100 volunteers at the start of the season, but 40 of those volunteers haven’t signed up for any shifts so far this season. The emergency shelter needs as many as nine volunteers each night to cover all the shifts. She said in response, they’re giving volunteers the option to break the 7 p.m. to midnight shift in half, working only 7-9:30 p.m. or 9:30 to midnight. She hopes that will encourage more people to sign up. Volunteers must be at least 18 years old, pass a background check and complete a training. Hill said she is working to schedule some more training sessions, which will be posted on the Hermiston Warming Station Facebook page. Hill said last year the warming station saw

unusually high numbers of guests, at about 18 per night. This year numbers have been lower, averaging around six. “Very few of our regulars returned this year,” she said. “It’s a new crowd this year. Hill said she knows some of the “regulars” from last season were able to find employment or start receiving housing assistance through CAPECO. Others moved away, had family take them in again or are currently serving jail terms. While the shelter has struggled to fill shifts this year, they are offering increased accommodations for guests. Hill said they received a grant to purchase a washer and dryer so that volunteers did not have to take bedding to the laundromat. In addition to washing the warming station’s items, they also plan to allow guests to bring some clothing for washing on Thursdays and Sundays. They have also started offering the guests breakfast bars in the morning and portable soup-to-go containers, such as Cup of Noodles, in the evenings. Hill said the most helpful thing people can donate to the warming station right now is the microwavable, single-serving soups. A volunteer is available from 2:30-4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday and from 12:30-2:30 p.m. on Sundays for people to drop of donations at the Hermiston Warming Station, 1075 South Highway 395. For questions about donations, call 541-303-3256.

## BRIEFLY

### Former Umatilla man found dead in Washington

SPOKANE, Wash. — A former Umatilla man accused of tying up his girlfriend and beating her with a baseball bat has been found dead in Stevens County, Washington, according to a Spokane, Washington, newspaper. The *Spokesman-Review* reported that Spokane police Sgt. Terry Preuninger confirmed the death of Andrew Beitel, 46, on Monday. Preuninger did not disclose any information about the circumstances of Beitel’s death or the precise location where his body was found, according to *The Spokesman-Review*. Stevens County authorities are investigating. Before living in Spokane, court records show Beitel resided in Umatilla and Bend. According to an alumni page, Beitel graduated from Umatilla High School and attended school from 1987-91. Police had been searching for Beitel since early Saturday, when a woman used an Amazon Alexa device to call 911, saying Beitel had tied her up and assaulted her at a home, *The Spokesman-Review* reported. After the attack, the woman was hospitalized with injuries that police described as serious but not life-threatening.

### Settlement conference set in M-F murder case

PENDLETON — A Milton-Freewater murder defendant may have her case resolved without going

to trial. Judge William Cramer Tuesday set a settlement conference date for March 13 in the murder case against Shayla Fawn Record Tsosie. Record Tsosie, 23, pleaded not guilty in September to stabbing and killing her boyfriend, Christian Rodriguez-Calvillo, 22, at their Milton-Freewater residence last summer. The settlement conference will allow the prosecution and defense to present their cases to Cramer and will include the family of Rodriguez-Calvillo to see if the case can be resolved without going to trial. Record Tsosie’s next court date is scheduled for Jan. 30 for a hearing on whether the proof is evident against her or the presumption of guilt is strong. Judge Christopher Brauer presided over the case’s earlier hearings and will preside over the Jan. 30 hearing. Cramer, who typically serves in Grant and Harney counties, will preside over the case’s settlement proceedings. Record Tsosie remains in custody at the Umatilla County Jail.

### Three injured, one arrested in Highway 395 crash

HERMISTON — A late afternoon crash on Highway 395 culminated in an arrest Monday evening. Somboon Srimeuang, 62, of Hermiston, was turning east onto Punkin Center

Road from Highway 395, in a Honda Accord and failed to yield to traffic, according to the Oregon State Police. Elias Mendoza, 28, of Hermiston, was headed north on the highway in a Toyota Corolla and struck Srimeuang’s vehicle on the passenger side. Troopers noticed Srimeuang exhibited signs of impairment. He agreed to submit a breath sample at the Hermiston police station which yielded a blood alcohol content of 0.21%. He is currently lodged at the Umatilla County Jail. Srimeuang was arraigned Tuesday on three misdemeanors — DUII (alcohol), reckless driving and fourth-degree assault. Srimeuang’s two passengers — an 8-year-old boy and a 67-year-old woman named Somchne Sisayaket, both of Hermiston — and Mendoza were all transported to Good Shepherd Medical Center with complaints of pain. Oregon State Police said that Life Flight was called, but did not end up responding to the incident. — EO Media Group



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