



EO file photo  
A pair of students enjoy breakfast before class in September 2018 at Armand Larive Middle School in Hermiston. The school, along with Sandstone Middle School, will soon have a dedicated school resource officer roaming the halls of the schools next year.

# Hermiston police to add third school resource officer

By JESSICA POLLARD  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — A new face will be roaming the halls of Hermiston’s two middle schools next year.

The Hermiston Police Department will soon hire a third school resource officer to work at Sandstone and Armand Larive middle schools. Police Chief Jason Edmiston said that the existing officers are overloaded due to the district’s population, and adding another will allow them to focus more closely on students who are at a “pivotal age.”

“Our goal is to make sure schools remain a safe environment for kids to learn,” he said. “We’re extremely happy to be in the schools. The funding component of it makes it compelling for us.”

Officer Betty Nava has worked in Hermiston’s elementary schools since 2016, and Officer Chris McMahon has worked in Hermiston’s secondary schools since 2017. He will narrow his focus to just Hermiston High School next year.

The district contracts with the city, and pays 75% of the total cost to employ school resource officers, a figure that totals between about \$198,300 and \$204,100 for both officers this budget year.

“We’ve known we’ve needed another resource officer for a long time. I’m looking forward to budgeting a new officer in,” said Hermiston Finance Director Mark Krawczyk.

Edmiston said the officers work full time in the schools, and take more time off during the summer months, but will still take calls and assist with cases.

“We try to manage best as possible the work they do during the summertime,” Edmiston said. “If they do patrol, we really consider what they are sent out to.”

Hermiston School District has had at least one school resource officer since the mid-1990s, Edmiston said, but having three resource officers is a new concept.

According to the police department’s annual report, Nava interacts with parents and teachers, handles traffic complaints, works with the principals and assists with truancy issues. Edmiston said she frequently makes herself present in the cafeteria during lunch time.

“When we start at the elementary, it’s a good way for our young kids to interact with a police officer and understand what they do,” said Hermiston School District Superintendent Tricia Mooney.

McMahon is assigned to all secondary schools, but Edmiston said he spends most of his time at the high school.

“The roles really are different in the sense that the ages of the kids are different,” Edmiston said. “We try to be proactive at the high school, but a lot of times his role is reactive.”

At a high school level, McMahon also enforces truancy laws, teaches on

safety topics and handles the criminal side of juvenile activity.

“Ultimately, the building administrator can handle school district issues, and the school resource officer can deal with the legal side of that,” Mooney said.

The officers might be found at school-based events, like football games at Kennison Field.

The police department has yet to hire the new resource officer, but Edmiston said the agency will look for and likely fill the position with someone already working at the department, a move that would result in the hire of a new police officer.

“I think career growth within our department is important. We do have people in the house that myself and my supervisors believe can fill the position,” he said.

This summer, all three officers and their supervisor, administrative Cpt. Travis Eynon, will attend the National Association of School Resource Officers conference in Dallas, Texas.

The association describes the role of a school resource officer as a “triad” — an educator, an informal counselor and a law enforcement officer.

Stanfield and Echo school districts share a community resource officer. Milton-Freewater School District gained a resource officer at the beginning of this school year, and Pendleton currently has one as well.

# Pilot Rock police responses see an increase in 2019

By ALEX CASTLE  
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — Pilot Rock police saw an increase in total incident responses for the third consecutive year in 2019, according to the annual incident report presented by Police Chief Bill Caldera at the city council meeting on Tuesday.

The department responded to 3,006 total incidents in 2019, a slight increase from the department’s 2,995 incident responses in 2018.

In the two years since adding a third full-time officer to the department, Pilot Rock police have nearly doubled its incident responses per year. The department has averaged just over 3,000 responses between 2018 and 2019, compared with the average of 1,596 responses in 2016 and 2017.

Caldera said on Thursday that there was nothing in particular that stood out in this year’s report aside from slight increases in

some incident types.

“It seems like we had our fair share of domestic violence incidents,” Caldera said Thursday. “Drug activity is increasing, and code enforcement was a priority.”

The report shows Pilot Rock police responded to 23 domestic disturbance incidents in 2019, which is only one more than the department’s 22 responses in both 2017 and 2018.

Responses to drug activity were the highest they’ve been in the last four years, though the 11 incidents in 2019 were just a couple more than the nine incidents police responded to in both 2017 and 2018.

Code enforcement was one of the largest increases, with the report showing police logged 110 code incidents in 2019 compared with 71 in 2018. In 2016 and 2017 prior to hiring its third officer, Pilot Rock police logged a combined 58 code incidents.

More than anything else, Pilot Rock police conducted 884 area checks in 2019.

“It’s essentially a security check,” Caldera said of area checks. “We do everything we can do to prevent burglaries and incidents like that.”

He noted that these have seemingly worked, as the department logged only one burglary in 2019 after responding to at least six each of the last three years.

The 389 traffic stops conducted by Pilot Rock police accounted for the next highest incident type in 2019, according to the report.

“Having a highway that comes through town generates most of those stops,” Caldera said. “I’d say about 80% of the time those stops are of people trying to get from point A to point B. It’s rarely locals.”

While having a third officer has made a difference in the department’s response capabilities, Caldera also announced on Tuesday that the department will be without one of its officers, who is on medical leave due to a nonwork related injury, until at least April 1.

## BRIEFLY

### County sets hearing date for fire district merger

PENDLETON — The proposal merging four eastern Umatilla County fire districts into one is on track to appear on the May ballot.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners called a special meeting on Friday afternoon in Pendleton to officially set a Feb. 24 hearing date to discuss uniting the rural fire districts of East Umatilla and Helix, the Athena Volunteer Fire Department, and the East Umatilla County Ambulance Area Health District.

The date was set with a second hearing date of March 18 in mind, which will be confirmed at the first hearing. In order to appear on the May ballot, the county must hold two public hearings on the proposal before the March 19 deadline.

The proposal would combine emergency response services and taxing districts for the cities of Athena, Helix, Weston and Adams. The move would keep the current tax rate for East Umatilla’s fire and ambulance district and raise the tax rate for the districts in Athena and Helix to match it.

The agencies are already headquartered together at the Weston fire station

and utilize a joint board comprised of members of each agency. However, the merger could yield \$120,000 in additional tax funding for the agencies.

In addition to the two county hearings, there will be nine town halls held throughout the four cities between Jan. 29 and May 11.

### Local government grant committee needs members

SALEM — The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is looking for qualified candidates to apply to the agency’s Local Government Grant Program Advisory Committee, according to a press release.

There are two openings, one for a county representative east of the Cascades, and another for a citizen representative for the public at large.

The grant program is funded by the Oregon Lottery and awards about \$6 million to community outdoor recreation projects throughout the state each year.

The committee meets for three days in Salem each June to review project applications and recommend funding recipients to the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission. Committee members typically serve four-year terms

and are required to review the grant applications ahead of the yearly meeting along with attending the meeting in June.

The release states that qualified candidates will have a demonstrated interest in outdoor recreation. Interested candidates should contact Mark Cowan, OPRD grant program coordinator, and request an interest form at mark.cowan@oregon.gov or 503-986-0591.

—EO Media Group

# Hermiston City Council to consider eminent domain

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Hermiston City Council will discuss the possible use of eminent domain Monday for a realignment of the intersection of Geer, Harper and River roads.

The confusing Y-shaped intersection west of Home Depot, which presents drivers with three closely spaced stop signs as it crosses over railroad tracks, is the most expensive street project on the city’s five-year capital

improvement plan, at \$1.5 million.

City engineers from Anderson Perry & Associates have been working since 2018 on a design for the intersection. The agenda packet for Monday’s meeting shows three possible designs for the realignment, and all three utilize two parcels located on the northeast side of the intersection.

According to a memo to councilors by Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan, a 2019 appraisal of the 0.81 acres of land valued it

at \$65,000. He lists reasons that other alignments aren’t feasible — using the railroad right-of-way on the northwest side creates a “very extreme angle” for southbound vehicles on Geer Road, for example.

City councilors will be asked Monday to vote on a resolution that would declare the parcels necessary for the project, allowing the city to force the property owner to sell even if they don’t want to. The memo does not include information about the current property owner

or whether the city has already approached them about selling.

On Monday, the council will also discuss some changes to the city’s code of ordinances, as part of an ongoing effort to update it chapter by chapter. This week’s chapters are on garbage and public contracts. The garbage chapter adds updated rules about handling of infectious waste. Proposed revisions to the public contracts chapter include clarifying language on conflicts of interest and allowing the city

IF YOU GO

What: Hermiston City Council

When: 7 p.m. Monday

Where: 235 E. Gladys Ave., basement of Hermiston Public Library

Online: Agenda packet can be found online at [hermiston.or.us/meetings](http://hermiston.or.us/meetings).

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Some exclusions may apply.

GOOD SHEPHERD COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION

2020 SPRING GRANTS

Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation awards Spring Grants annually to qualified organizations for the betterment of health needs within our local service communities.

The deadline to submit a Spring Grant application is January 31st, 2020.

Applications can be made online at [gshealth.org/foundation/awards](http://gshealth.org/foundation/awards) or call the Foundation office at 541-667-3419 for further information.

GOOD SHEPHERD COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION