



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
The city of Hermiston’s Christmas tree is loaded onto a trailer in front of a Hermiston home where it was harvested on Monday, Nov. 30, 2020.



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The Hermiston Christmas tree crosses Highway 395 in Hermiston on its brief journey to Northeast Second Street on Monday, Nov. 30, 2020.

Christmas tree arrives in downtown Hermiston

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Hermiston’s annual holiday tree is in the ground and ready to bring some Christmas cheer to downtown.

The city, with the help of equipment and workers from Umatilla Electric Cooperative, “planted” the tall tree on the festival street on Northeast Second Street next to city hall on Monday, Nov. 30.

This year’s tree was donated by Brenda and Whitley Smith of Hermiston, from their yard. Brenda said the tree was there when they bought the house about 29 years ago, and it’s “grown pretty big” in the years since. The Smiths were concerned about its growth into the nearby power lines, and so when Parks and Recreation Director Larry Fetter offered to take it off their hands for free and give it new life as the downtown Christmas tree, they took the offer.

“We decided it was probably time to let other people



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Line crews from Umatilla Electric Cooperative harvest a Christmas tree from the front yard of a Hermiston home on Monday, Nov. 30, 2020.

enjoy it,” Brenda said.

She said she drove down after UEC removed the tree and installed it downtown,

and she was proud to see it there.

“It looks nice,” she said. “We’re kind of excited other

people get to enjoy it. We’ve enjoyed watching the birds in it. They’ll be surprised it’s not there anymore, but

they’ll adjust, I suppose.”

The tree will be decorated over the next few days before a livestreamed Christ-

mas tree lighting event with Santa Claus on Thursday, Dec. 3. Fetter said this year people will have to enjoy the event from the safety of their homes rather than gathering for an in-person celebration, but after the tree is lit, it will be available for people to come and take pictures with on their own schedule during the month of December.

The virtual event on Dec. 3 will be streamed on the city’s social media platforms from 5:30-6:30 p.m., with the actual tree lighting by Santa at 6 p.m. Before and after the tree lighting will be holiday musical performances and readings of holiday stories.

After the tree is done serving its purpose downtown, it will be chopped up for firewood and donated to the Agape House.

Although people are asked to watch the Christmas tree lighting virtually, the Hermiston Downtown District will still hold its First Thursday event. Downtown merchants will have sales for Ladies’ Day from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Dec. 3.

Sea of clouds



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Wind turbines rise above the clouds near Weston on Sunday, Nov. 29, 2020.

City of Hermiston offers up parking lots for outdoor dining

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — After Gov. Kate Brown announced restaurants will be able to offer outdoor dining under all levels of COVID-19 restrictions, the city of Hermiston is offering up the use of its parking lots to downtown restaurants.

Restaurants near municipal lots will be able to use portions of those lots to set up seating, fencing, canopies, space heaters and other amenities for outdoor dining. While they will be required to sign a rental agreement to use the space, they will not be charged a fee, according to a news release from the city.

The city is also donating \$15,000 to the Hermiston Downtown District to help businesses with the cost of setting up outdoor seating, and is working with the district to make all restaurant owners in the downtown district aware of the opportunity.

“Our downtown businesses and restaurants are part of what makes this community special, and it’s our



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
The parking lot adjacent to The Pheasant Blue Collar Bar & Grill in Hermiston is among several the city of Hermiston is offering up to restaurants for outdoor dining.

priority to make sure they have every chance to succeed in these difficult times,” Mayor David Drotzmann said in a statement. “As they get creative and find new ways to serve their customers, I encourage residents to make an effort to shop local and support our friends and neighbors.”

Available lots near restaurants are on East Gladys Avenue and Hurlburt Avenue, adjacent to restaurants, including The Pheasant Blue Collar Bar & Grill, Golden Palace and La Palma.

On Wednesday, Nov. 25,

the governor announced that when the two-week “freeze” for gatherings and businesses ends on Thursday, Dec. 3, the state will be going into a new, four-level system of restrictions based on a county’s calculated risk. Umatilla County is one of 21 counties that will start out on the highest level, “extreme risk,” in which restaurants will be restricted to takeout, delivery and outdoor seating only.

The city has stated that restaurants can use its parking lots for free for as long as Umatilla County remains restricted to outdoor dining.

NEED A RIDE TO WORK?

CAR TROUBLE?
DON'T HAVE A DRIVER'S LICENSE?
DON'T WORRY! WE GOT YOU COVERED!

A WORC taxi will get you to and from your job anywhere in western Umatilla County.

Anyone who comes in through the end of December, can get four FREE punch cards, which equals 40 one-way rides to/from work.

Visit <https://hermiston.or.us/public-transit> to find out how to sign up, and how WORC and the HART bus service work together to connect Hermiston.