

# Council, planning commission discuss zoning updates

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — A new state housing law taking effect soon is forcing adjustments to Hermiston's residential codes.

The Hermiston City Council and Planning Commission held a joint work session Monday, March 22, to discuss how to handle the zoning requirements for House Bill 2001, which in part requires duplexes to be allowed in all housing zones and prohibits cities from placing different

requirements on duplexes than single family dwellings. If cities don't rewrite their code by June 30, City Planner Clint Spencer said, then the state has provided its own model code that will take effect instead.

"We've had some very spirited discussion regarding how best to implement and adopt the duplex housing standards," Spencer said of the planning commission.

The new law means duplexes will be allowed in the city's R-1 zone, where previously only single family dwellings were

allowed. For minimum lot sizes and a list of other standards, the city essentially has three options under the new law, all of which were discussed during the March 22 work session. It can allow duplexes to be built to the standards currently applied to single family homes, which would allow for more crowded neighborhoods.

It can start holding single family dwellings to the standards for duplexes, which would make development more expensive for developers of new single family subdivisions. Or it

can create a new standard that falls somewhere in the middle.

The law was passed in an effort to provide Oregonians with more housing choices by making it easier for developers to build more types of affordable housing. But some components of the law, participants in the meeting complained, weren't written with rural communities in mind. The law states that cities cannot require developers to provide more than one parking space per unit, for example, even though studies show rural house-

holds are more likely to have more than one vehicle.

"The legislation was written with the assumption that everyone has one and a bike and that's not the way of life in Hermiston," Spencer said.

Planning commission members told the city council that due to the June deadline, they wanted to get input before they started going down a path the city council didn't like and ran out of time to change course. Over the course of more than an hour, city councilors made suggestions and asked ques-

tions about possible solutions to address concerns about density.

Most ended the meeting by saying they would prefer to see the city maintain its standards for single family dwellings for both types of housing for now, to meet the state's deadline, but continue to study the issue and possibly make some adjustments to some standards in the future.

"Between now and June 30, the time is too crunched to make any really altering decisions," Councilor Roy Barron said.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

The Umatilla County Justice Center, which houses the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office and jail, is bathed in the afternoon sun on Dec. 4, 2020. Thirteen inmates at the Umatilla County Jail tested positive for COVID-19 last week.

## COVID-19 outbreak at county jail

Two inmates from same housing unit test positive on Tuesday, March 16

By BRYCE DOLE  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Thirteen inmates at the Umatilla County Jail tested positive for COVID-19 last week, according to Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan.

The outbreak began when two inmates from the same housing unit tested positive on Tuesday, March 16, the same day the jail had begun offering the first COVID-19 vaccines to inmates, Rowan said.

In response to the positive tests, the jail tested the rest of the inmates in the housing unit where the two tested positive, which holds about

20 people. By the end of the week, 11 more tests came back positive. The housing unit was placed under quarantine, Rowan said.

However, the 13 inmates who tested positive have shown "no symptoms whatsoever," Rowan said.

Rowan said the jail has been following a variety of safety protocols to ensure that infection doesn't continue to spread, including keeping the quarantined inmates in a unit where ventilation does not reach the rest of the jail. Inmates on quarantine are also allowed out of their cells only by themselves to ensure that they don't pass on the virus.

The inmates who tested positive will be released from quarantine on March 25, Rowan said.

Rowan added that the jail has been able to avoid case spikes like this in the past

by maintaining health and safety protocols.

Temperature checks and screening are conducted before people can enter the jail. The jail has also halved the number of people allowed in housing units of 40 people, Rowan said.

The case spike coincided with the jail's first vaccine effort since Gov. Kate Brown announced in February that the state's jail inmates would be offered the vaccine. In all, 160 inmates were offered the vaccine at the jail, but only 17 accepted, Rowan said.

Rowan said he wasn't sure why inmates largely did not accept the vaccine. He added that the jail offered the Johnson & Johnson single-shot vaccine because the jail population "can change by 30 people in a day," making it difficult for health officials to offer second doses two weeks later.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Sunset Elementary School teacher Natalie Trotter leads a class on the first day of in-person instruction for the Hermiston School District on Feb. 17, 2021.

## Hermiston School District announces full-time school

Full-time status set for April 13

East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Hermiston School District announced on Tuesday, March 23, that all students will return to in-person classes full time, five days a week starting April 13.

The announcement, which came shortly before the *Hermiston Herald* went to print, stated the change was made possible by the unexpected update to the state's Safe Schools, Ready Learners safety rules on Monday, March 22, that allowed districts to shrink

the space between students' desks from 6 feet to 3 feet.

Students will have school off on April 12 to allow staff to prepare. When they return, elementary students will attend from 7:55 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., with a 1:45 pm release on Wednesdays. Middle school students will attend from 8:30 a.m. to 3:18 p.m., with a 9:15 a.m. start on Wednesdays. High school students will go from 8:25 a.m. to 3:25 p.m., with a 9:10 a.m. start on Wednesdays.

"This is welcome news, following updated federal guidance," Superintendent Tricia Mooney said in a statement. "I want to express my gratitude for the

community's support and for everyone doing their part to help keep each other safe and reduce case counts."

On March 23, Gov. Kate Brown also announced Umatilla County will remain at the high risk level of restrictions for COVID-19 for another two weeks and Morrow County will remain at low risk.

Oregon Health Authority assesses COVID-19 cases and test positivity every 14 days to determine the level of restrictions for each county. The risk levels determine the capacity allowed for indoor dining establishments, gyms, churches, event centers and other gathering places.

### LOCAL BRIEFING

#### Car crash leads to brief chase and arrest

MILTON-FREEWATER — The Milton-Freewater Police Department arrested a motorist after he allegedly collided with another vehicle with passengers, including a 2-year-old child, in Milton-Freewater on Friday, March 19, according to a press release from police.

Courtney Broxson, 28, told police that she was driving westbound in the 200 block of Northeast Eighth Avenue at around 9 p.m. on March 19 and was stopping at an intersection when a car driving the opposite direction tried to pass another vehicle, according to the press release.

The vehicle, which she described as a Toyota Corolla, entered her lane and headed straight toward her, according to the press release. In Broxson's car was her boyfriend, Ryan Villalobos, and her 2-year-old son.

Broxson told police that she attempted to swerve out of the way, but the Corolla collided with the rear section of the driver's side of the vehicle. The Corolla did not stop, so Broxson said she pursued the Corolla

while Villalobos called the police, according to the press release.

Police responded and, with Broxson's assistance, located the Corolla in the 800 Block of North Main Street in Milton-Freewater. Police identified the driver as Hiseld Guido Madrigal, 25.

Madrigal was arrested on charges of driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving and recklessly endangering another person (multiple victims). He was also charged with several other noncriminal traffic violations.

Madrigal could not be housed in the Umatilla County Jail due to COVID-19 restrictions and protocols. He was later cited and released with a court date, the press release said.

#### Umatilla plans spring cleaning day

UMATILLA — The city of Umatilla is holding a city-wide spring cleaning day from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 10.

For people who need the city to pick up items for disposal, pickups can be scheduled until April 5 by calling 541-922-3226 ext. 113 or emailing hannah@umatilla-city.org.

Items must be on the sidewalk or side of the roadway and easy to grab. Staff will not pick up items on private property, such as yards or driveways, will not climb into any trailers or vehicles, and will not collect any biohazards, such as needles or animal waste.

Dumpsters will also be located at the public works building, 1205 Third St., for people to drop off their items themselves.

Gates to the drop-off area will close promptly at 1 p.m., and no more items will be accepted after that time.

— EO Media Group

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2:00p 5:00p 8:00p

**Raya and the Last Dragon (PG)**  
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**Nomadland (R)**  
4:20p

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