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Hotelier plans new Pendleton Holiday Inn in 2022

Three sites under consideration in Pendleton

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — A Tri-Cities hotelier is readying development on a new Holiday Inn in Pendleton, with an exact location to

be determined.

In an interview, Parn Singh said he and his family's company, the Richland, Washington-based Eternal Hotels, first bought into Pendleton's hotel market in 2015 and now own both the current Holiday Inn Express, 600 S.E. Nye Ave., and the Best Western Inn next door.

Singh said the Pendleton market has been good enough to his company that it's now looking to construct a new building to house

its Holiday Inn property. Construction is set to start later this year with a grand opening in 2022.

"It will be a lot more modern and stick out more in Pendleton," he said.

Like all other Pendleton hotels, Singh said his properties took a hit during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 cancelation of events, such as Round-Up and the Pendleton Whisky Music Fest, meant Singh's hotels lost out on the kind of

weeklong revenue that could equal their whole month of December.

But he added that local event organizers did a good job of holding small events when they could. Combined with the guests drawn in from the steady traffic traveling through Pendleton on Interstate 84, Eternal is ready to build a new hotel as the country begins to emerge from the pandemic.

Featuring several hotel chains, including Motel 6, Super 8, the Red

Lion Hotel and the Hampton Inn, Nye's close proximity to I-84 has made it a hub for overnight stays. Singh said Eternal has already purchased two pieces of land where the hotel could be located.

One of the locations is some bare land at the corner of Nye and Southeast Third Drive, where the city's Bi-Mart used to be. Singh said an electrical company is currently

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Company in SD offers grain bins on wheels

Mother bins help local farmers streamline operations

By BEN LONERGAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Towering over a field at Jones & Jones Ranch outside of Pendleton, the 58-foot-long and nearly 13-foot-tall mother bin dwarfed its attached tractor during a recent field day demonstration hosted by Walkabout Mother Bins and FEI, Inc.

"The idea of the mother bin is to constantly keep your combines and your grain carts running and your trucks running," said Crystal Kopecky, director of sales at Walkabout Mother Bins.

Based in Faulkton, South Dakota, Walkabout Mother Bins has been pioneering the concept of the mother bin in the United States since its start several years ago. While new to the U.S., the concept of the mother bin has been around in Australia since at least the early 1980s, said Kopecky. Born out of labor shortages, the colossal piece of farm equipment helped cut down on harvest times and save money by creating a site for temporary storage of grain prior to transport away from the field.

"This allows you to keep up if you're not keeping up," Kopecky said. "But if your operation is keeping up it will allow you to reduce your trucks and labor needs."

With a capacity of more than 4,000 bushels, the mother bin sits on the edge of the field and acts as a temporary storage facility for grain to pick up slack between combines and semitrucks hauling grain to storage. Combines fill bankout wagons, which in turn fill the mother bin for holding until it can be transported. From there a 22-inch auger can load a semitruck in mere minutes.

"Equipment nowadays, especially your combines, they're built

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

School bus driver Bill Settle surveys the interior of his bus in a mirror while working through a pre-trip inspection of his bus at the Mid Columbia Bus Co. bus barn on Wednesday, May 12, 2021.

Driver shortage

Mid Columbia Bus Co. considers higher wages for Pendleton drivers to help fill shortfall

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Struggling to keep itself fully staffed, the Pendleton School District's school bus contractor is pitching the district on a new recruiting strategy — pay its school bus drivers more.

Representatives from Mid Columbia Bus Co., which provides school bus services to school districts across Umatilla and Morrow counties, have spoken at the Pendleton School Board's April and May meetings to share the details behind its latest driver shortage and what the Pendleton company

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A school bus is bathed in the early morning sunlight at the Mid Columbia Bus Co. bus barn outside of Pendleton on Wednesday, May 12, 2021.

'We're at a severe shortage'

Hermiston Family Aquatic Center following nationwide trend with lifeguard shortage

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Parents are anxiously awaiting news on summer swim lesson signups at the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center, but center officials need to convince some more people to become lifeguards first.

Brandon Artz, recreation supervisor for Hermiston and Recreation, said the aquatic center usually hires about 100 staff for the season, but is still in need of 50 more lifeguards.

"We're at a severe shortage," he

said. "We've done some recruitment at the high schools, but like everyone else in town, we're hiring."

The shortage seems to be nationwide, he said.

Artz said usually the department puts out swim lesson signups in mid-May, and he has already had a steady stream of parents calling to ask about lessons. But they can't draw up a schedule yet until they know how many lifeguards they will end up having, and if there aren't as many as usual, that will translate into fewer offerings at the pool. He said that includes hopes the department had to offer free swim lessons to students participating in summer camps with school districts this year.

The aquatic center's 50-meter

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East Oregonian, File

Hayley Mele-Seibel watches the pool during swim lessons at the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center in 2018. The aquatic center is facing a shortage of lifeguards so far this season.

