

Milton-Freewater OKs warmer aquatic center pool

By SHEILA HAGAR
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — It won't happen when the pool opens in June, probably, and it might not come until August. But the water in the Joe Humbert Family Aquatic Center, Milton-Freewater, once again will flow warmer at some point in this swim season.

The city council on April 11 voted unanimously to spend \$88,546 for two "Big Bopper" pool heaters to raise the temperature of the public pool to a level more conducive to comfort and safety.

The decision came after a plea from a group of concerned residents who came before the council in March to tell members how the unheated water made the pool too cold to enjoy and that water temperatures below 70 degrees could lead to health issues, according to the American Red Cross.

Before the vote, Council President Steve Irving thanked those in the audience who had brought the matter to the city.

"You have my support," Irving said. "You have my attention."

City officials had said there wasn't enough money left over from 2018's Parks and Recreation levy of



A Milton-Freewater city employee on April 8, 2022, works on the grounds of the Joe Humbert Family Aquatic Center. The Milton-Freewater City Council has voted to spend \$88,546 for two "Big Bopper" pool heaters to raise the temperature of the public pool to a level more conducive to comfort and safety.

Sheila Hagar/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

\$500,000 to buy heaters. The city already has used some \$344,000 to make numerous repair and improvements to the 25-year-old facility, and last year's bid for the heaters rang up at about \$79,000.

Instead, the city purchased a thermal cover in 2021 to put over the water at night for heat retention. This

year, however, regular users of the pool said that system was inadequate for the water warmth needed to improve conditions.

In March, the council directed city staff to look for possible solutions. City Manager Linda Hall on April 11 delivered a double dose of good news: Not only

could Mill Creek Mechanical in Walla Walla do the job for less money than her staff originally feared, but available coronavirus relief funds could fill the financial gap between levy leftovers and heater costs.

The coronavirus dollars have been held back for use in city utilities improvements,

but some of those can be released without bankrupting that fund, Hall said.

The decision does leave less money for other projects, including backfilling general fund losses from pandemic-related costs and loss of revenue, she noted.

Milton-Freewater will pay a down payment of 55%, or

\$48,750, with the remainder due in 2023.

Public Works Superintendent Brian Steadman said the order immediately will go to Mill Creek Mechanical, which has bid on this project several times. However, it's anticipated it will take about four months for the pumps to be built, delivered and installed, Steadman said.

Resident Markie McRae, who first brought the pool issue to the council in February, said on April 12 she is pleased and surprised the council moved so quickly on the issue.

McRae said she fully supports using pandemic relief money for the cause.

"Swimming is a physical and mental release. And there has been concern about mental health in our children, coming out of the pandemic after staying home for two years."

In working on this issue, McRae said she was gratified when others joined in. She has discovered how much happens at city council meetings, she added.

"It's well worth the effort to go. It's been a very positive experience for me."

The next Milton-Freewater City Council meets next at 7 p.m., May 9, in the Albee Room of the public library, 8 S.W. Eighth Ave.

Hermiston looks to take over EOTEC roads

By ERICK PETERSON
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Two Umatilla county roads running alongside the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston soon will belong to the city of Hermiston.

The Hermiston City Council at its meeting Monday, April 25, plans to approve transferring East Airport and South Ott roads to the city. County and city officials said the transfer is part of Hermiston's growth and the fulfillment of an agreement.

"When EOTEC was first developed, it was developed as a partnership between the city of Hermiston and Umatilla County," Umatilla County Commissioner Dan Dorrán said. "When the county transferred the ownership of EOTEC to the city, the road was part of the process. The county was liable for paving the road."

He said East Airport Road has been paved and the bike path is in. All this



By Erick Peterson/East Oregonian

A stop sign stands at the intersection of East Airport and South Ott roads, Hermiston. Umatilla County owns the roads, which run along the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, but the Hermiston City Council at its meeting Monday, April 25, 2022, looks to transfer the roads to the city.

work was completed in the past month.

"The county has done its side, and now the city needs to take action," Hermiston City Manager Byron Smith said.

The city's part of the deal will be claiming the roads in the upcoming city council meeting.

He said this development will not change services for anyone who lives on the roads. Some of the homes

on the road are county, others are city, and none of this will change.

"Nobody's getting annexed or anything like that," he said.

The transfer is related to the agreement between Hermiston and Umatilla County to develop the event center, Smith said, but this also "is kind of a separate issue."

The county and the city have discussions often

about county roads, he explained, and as the city put, the city makes county roads into city streets. He said it's part of the business in a growing city.

The county transferred EOTEC to the city in 2008, Smith said, and he thinks things are going "pretty well" with it. The next council meeting also will include an update on EOTEC.

"Right now, what we're seeing is things are getting better after COVID. People are starting to book events, and it's looking good," he said.

Mark Morgan, assistant city manager, said for most people this sort of transfer seems insignificant, but it does make a difference.

"Whoever is legally responsible for that road, that's where the ultimate long-term maintenance is assigned," he said.

When the streets need work, the city will have to pay for it from money it receives from state gas tax revenue.

Shoni Schimmel faces federal assault charges

East Oregonian

PORTLAND — WNBA player Shoni Schimmel, 29, of Pendleton, is facing federal assault charges that could put her in prison for 15 years.

U.S. Attorney's Office in Oregon in a press release reported a federal court unsealed an indictment Friday, April 15, charging former Schimmel with assault by strangulation of an intimate dating partner and assault resulting in substantial bodily injury on the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

According to the indictment, on June 13, 2021, Schimmel allegedly strangled her partner on the reservation. Schimmel further assaulted her partner causing substantial bodily injury.

Federal authorities on April 15 arrested Schimmel, who also made her initial appearance in federal court, where during an arraignment she pleaded not guilty. The court released her and scheduled a two-day jury trial scheduled for June 14.

If convicted, according to the press release, Schimmel faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in federal prison, three years' supervised release and a fine of \$250,000.

U.S. Attorney Scott Erik Asphaug of the District of Oregon made the announcement.

The FBI and the Umatilla

Tribal Police Department investigate the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Ashley R. Cadotte is prosecuting the case.

An indictment is only an accusation of a crime, and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Domestic violence is a serious crime that includes both physical and emotional abuse. It is frequently hidden from public view. Many survivors suffer in silence, afraid to seek help or not knowing where to turn. The traumatic effects of domestic violence also extend beyond the abused person, impacting family members and communities.

If you or someone you know are in immediate danger, please call 911.

If you need assistance or know someone who needs help, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). Many communities throughout the country have developed support networks to assist survivors in the process of recovery.

The StrongHearts Native Helpline offers culturally specific support and advocacy for American Indian and Alaska Native survivors of domestic violence. Call 1-844-762-8483 or visit www.strongheartshelpline.org for more information.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Pendleton police report staffing changes

PENDLETON — Pendleton Police Department this month reported two long-time officers have departed and two newer officers have joined the force.

Cpl. Ryan Lehnert retired from the department on

April 5 after a career spanning almost 30 years, according to an announcement the department posted on its Facebook page. The department stated it would miss Lehnert for "his positive attitude, his way of looking out for everyone he comes across and his honor and integrity in serving the citizens of Pendleton."

On April 11, the depart-

ment reported it lost another veteran when Sgt. Jon Lehman decided after more than 10 years in law enforcement to try his hand at something new. The department didn't specify what that was but wished Lehman well.

Between the two departures, however, Pendleton police reported hiring its two newest officers.

Officer Alex Jensen comes to Pendleton from Stanfield Police Department "and will be on the road in no time," according to the department, while officer Adam Nell gets to spend "16 fun-filled weeks" in the basic police course at the Oregon Public Safety Academy in Salem beginning later this summer.

—EO Media group

2022

I Northeast Oregon

PHOTO CONTEST

Visit eastoregonian.com and enter today!

PRE-OWNED TRUCKS NOW IN STOCK!
INQUIRE TODAY!

2017 GMC Canyon
\$38,995.00

2018 Chevy Silverado
\$39,995.00

Want A Job?
Call Us Today!

1740 Washington Baker City
1-800-399-391
www.bakercitygmsales.com