



Hermiston Herald

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YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

HERMISTONHERALD.COM

HVES rates may increase

Average bill would go up by about \$11 each month

BY SEAN HART
HERMISTON HERALD

Although the energy rates will still be among the lowest in the state, Hermiston Energy Services customers will likely see an increase in their power bill in May.

HES Superintendent Nate Rivera presented a report to the Hermiston City Council during a work session Monday and said the municipal electric company must raise rates to keep up with rising costs for wholesale electricity.

He recommended an overall 10.95 percent increase on electric bills beginning May 1 and another increase of approximately 9.5 percent beginning May 1, 2016.

Rivera said average residential members who use 1,500 kilowatt hours per month currently pay \$101.45 and, under the pro-

SEE RATES/A10

TODAY'S WEATHER



Mostly Sunny
High: 56° Low: 38°

OUTLOOK

- THURSDAY
Morning clouds
High: 55° Low: 36°
- FRIDAY
Chance of rain
High: 49° Low: 30°

A complete weather forecast is featured on page A2.



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FOR LOCAL BREAKING NEWS

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District to lease former Red Apple

Moving staff will temporarily ease space limitations

"That's a challenge. Obviously you can't squeeze 150 kids into two classrooms."

— Wade Smith

District Deputy Superintendent

BY JESSICA KELLER
HERMISTON HERALD

The Hermiston School District will temporarily solve space concerns anticipated next year by moving administrative and support staff to a former grocery store building in Hermiston.

The district intends to lease the building, near the corner of 11th Street and Orchard Avenue, after the Hermiston School Board signed off on the proposal at a regular meeting Monday. District

Deputy Superintendent Wade Smith said after the meeting that he is confident the district will successfully negotiate the lease terms with Double H LLC. According to the lease parameters, the district will lease the building, which was formerly El Gran Chaparral and Bob's Red Apple, for an initial amount of no more than \$1.05 per square foot, or approximately \$300,000 per year.

Smith said the 20-year lease will temporarily free up needed space to accommodate students at Hermiston High School and the Innovative Learning Center and move district support staff and administration, currently spread throughout the district, into one building, which the district has the option to buy every five years of the lease agreement.

The School Board opted in fa-

vor of the lease agreement rather than purchasing four additional modular units, which would cost more than \$1 million, to solve space concerns for the 2015-16 school year. Smith said, currently, the high school only has two unused classrooms available, but 150 more students are expected next year.

"That's a challenge," Smith said. "Obviously you can't squeeze 150 kids into two classrooms."

By leasing the building, however, the school district can move its technology department out of the high school, freeing up approximately three and a half classrooms, including one former computer lab and a storage room, to serve the

SEE SPACE/A10



MAEGAN MURRAY PHOTO

Rocky Heights Elementary School, pictured, and Highland Hills Elementary School each have more than 25 doors that pose a significant safety concern because intruders can potentially access the buildings at multiple points.

Aging elementary schools pose risks

BY MAEGAN MURRAY
HERMISTON HERALD

While the Hermiston School District has improved security infrastructure and protocols in recent years, two elementary schools in the district still pose safety risks that Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston describes as a "logistical nightmare."

Superintendent Fred Maiocco said, thanks to funding provided from the 2008 bond measure, the district has installed cameras, increased fencing and, at the older schools,



MAEGAN MURRAY PHOTO

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said the multiple access points into Highland Hills Elementary School, pictured, and Rocky Heights Elementary School, would make responding to a report of an intruder a tactical nightmare to address.

additional barriers that prevent people from driving their vehicle directly onto

the school campuses, in the last several years. For some of the schools, spe-

cifically Rocky Heights and Highland Hills elementary schools, however, those measures just aren't enough, he said.

"Rocky Heights (Elementary School) sits at an improved status from where it was previously, that is true," Maiocco said. "The same is true at Highland Hills. While we have spent some money in some of these older facilities, we know we can't continue to tolerate conditions that are going to make it unsafe for students. As mentioned by Jason Edmiston, having schools that have many exterior doors and exterior hallways is absolutely unsafe."

During a Hermiston

School Board meeting earlier this year, Edmiston shared his largest concerns about Rocky Heights and Highland Hills in his findings from a buildings evaluation report about the safety and security of Hermiston schools. He said, because of how those two schools are built, both buildings pose safety threats that are concerning, at best.

"From a purely tactical standpoint, if there was any incident involving the police, it is logistically a nightmare to try and corral any type of a situation," Edmiston said.

Edmiston said the prob-

SEE SAFETY/A2

TRCI inmates to train dogs in new program

Animals will later be placed for adoption

BY MAEGAN MURRAY
HERMISTON HERALD

Beginning next month, dogs who may have had a "ruff" go of things will be given a second chance from an unlikely group also getting a second chance to do some good.

For the first time, Two

Rivers Correctional Institution inmates will train local stray and surrendered dogs so they are more marketable for adoption.

For the program, 18 inmates who have been screened and interviewed by TRCI staff will train six dogs from Pet Rescue for eight to 10 weeks beginning in March. Tracy Hill, a dog trainer with 4 Paws DogWorks, has volunteered to teach the inmates how to train the animals. Hill will also work with the inmates one-on-one as they

interact with the dogs.

TRCI correctional counselor Dessa Myrick said many of the institutions that have started a dog-training program have seen tremendous success. She said participating in the program gives inmates an incentive to behave and meet expectations.

"A lot of (the inmates) were excited and wanted to do it, but they can't because they don't meet the criteria," she said. "This provides an incentive."

Myrick said the

dog-training program also improves the inmates socialization skills as well as the dogs' chances of being adopted.

"Petting dogs has been shown to lower blood pressure," Myrick said. "It can help people, including inmates, cope with stress, anxiety. Inmates can also feel like they are providing a dog with a second chance while also getting a second chance to do some good."

TRCI's dog-training program will be conducted by medium-security in-

mates, as opposed to those in minimum security, because prison officials wanted to increase the programs available to those inmates, Myrick said.

Myrick said, once the inmates are chosen for the program, three will be assigned to a single dog, and they will rotate duties as main handler, alternate handler and back-up or "babysitter."

Hill will provide the inmates with classroom in-

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