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ZONES:

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would be more appropriate to be downtown transitional, some areas that are downtown transitional that are more appropriate for downtown commercial and then a couple areas that are general commercial that would be more appropriate as neighborhood commercial, given the area and the types of uses that you would

anticipate.”

He said a general commercial zone in the South Hill area was one of the zones the commission recommended changing to neighborhood commercial.

A portion of the McNary area is also currently zoned general commercial, and Searles said the commission discussed adding a sixth zone to fit the area.

“They were thinking that we might want to create a new zone for that, something that is may-

be a little bit along the lines of the downtown transitional zone, something that is compatible with pedestrian and small- to medium-scale auto-oriented uses,” he said. “... I need to take a look at some of the uses that are already out there and try to be as accommodating to those as possible.”

Searles said that, at Tuesday’s meeting, the commission also reviewed the ordinance language for the bulk of the project specifying what uses

are allowed in each zone. The current ordinance language is similar in all of the commercial zones and does not list what uses are allowed. By specifying the allowed uses for each of the zones, the proposed changes differentiate the zones and effectively regulate where certain businesses will be allowed to open. Strip clubs and marijuana dispensaries, for example, would only be allowed in the general and highway commer-

cial zones.

Searles said, because the changes would affect each of the commercial zones, every property owner in those areas would receive an individual notice before the public hearing. The changes will only affect new or expanding businesses, not those already in operation.

The next Planning Commission work session begins at 5:30 p.m. March 24 at Umatilla City Hall.

SLIDE

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will be enclosed, rather than open like the other one, and the city contracted with AquaBlue to engineer, manufacture and install it.

“We wanted a different type of slide, instead of putting in a secondary slide that was really similar,” he said. “With it being enclosed, they’re just a little faster in general, and, because it has to go out under the other one, it’s going to have a little bit of a steeper slope to it, so this slide should be faster than the one we currently have. So

this should be more fun in that sense for those looking for a little bit more of a thrill.”

Earp said the slide was paid for through Transient Room Tax money designated for Parks and Recreation for major projects. The city collects TRT funds when people stay in temporary lodging such as hotels. He said some of the cost may also be recovered through increased attendance at the center.

Even without the additional attraction, Earp said the aquatic center has been popular. Last year, he said, the facility exceeded the City Council’s cost-recovery goal, and an estimated

60,000 attendees “came through the door” for the various offerings, including public swim time, swimming lessons, fitness programs and private events. He said the center hires about 65 life guards and swimming instructors for the summer season, along with another 25 front desk, concessions and supervisory employees.

“This is a huge, huge portion of our program in the summer time,” he said. “Summer is, by far, our busiest season. We offer a lot of camps and other programs, but a majority of our focus goes into this center. This is the main attraction in Hermiston in the summer time. We really put a lot of attention trying to make this a really fun, safe experience. Safety is obviously really important for us, so that people feel like they can send their kids here or come here with their families and don’t have to worry about much but just enjoy the nice sunshine that we get.”

People can try the new slide when the aquatic center opens June 6, and Earp said the facility will continue to be updated to keep people coming back for more.

“This is, by far, the biggest improvement we have made to the aquatic center since it opened with a new slide, but every few years we do try to add new features to increase its popularity,” he said. “This isn’t the end. We do have plans to make improvements in the future. We’re looking for different options, and we’re always looking to enhance the experience here.”



SEAN HART PHOTO

Adam Cornelius, a subcontractor for slide company AquaBlue, bolts together halves of a piece of the new enclosed slide at the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center Thursday.

CANNELL:

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Until she has a physical event center to run, much of Cannell’s job will be marketing the EOTEC project to get it on event coordinators’ radar. Her salary will be paid from the tourism promotion assessment fund generated for marketing by quarterly payments from local hoteliers and RV park owners.

Board member Ed Brookshier said Cannell was a good fit for the job.

“What impressed me from the very beginning is that she really got, and understands, what we’re doing here,” he said.

Dorran called EOTEC a “tweener facility” that will offer something for events that have outgrown fairgrounds and conference centers but can’t fill a large

expo center.

“There’s a niche out there, and we’re going to fill it very quickly,” he said.

Barton Laser Leveling has been working since December on grading and underground utilities for the site. On Friday, the board prepared to start “vertical construction” by awarding a bid for construction of the event center building to G2 Construction of Kennewick.

The company beat out Knerr Construction of Hermiston and Apollo Inc. of Kennewick.

“All three firms were very, very qualified,” project manager Gary Winsand said. “It was a tough choice.”

Winsand said the bids for the event center came in just “a smidge over” the \$2.8 million budget estimate for the event center construction. EOTEC’s

overall project budget is a little more than \$12.8 million.

G2 Construction president Doug Gunther said his company was grateful for the opportunity to become part of the project, and he planned to start attending EOTEC meetings regularly.

Next month, the EOTEC authority plans to approve Frew Development’s design for the rodeo arena and livestock barns and release bid packages for construction. According to a report Winsand handed the board, sitework will begin “in earnest” in late March.

Dorran said the board has not had time yet to speak to Umatilla County about replacing board member Chet Prior, who filled a county-appointed seat on the EOTEC authority until his death Feb. 15.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Hermiston High School senior Tymek Chrzanowski, far right, and HHS junior Elizabeth Herrera pose for a photo with officials from the Poetry Out Loud Competition after receiving awards for competing Monday night. Chrzanowski earned the highest score of the night and will participate in another competition March 7 in Salem.

POETRY:

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day.

“I did get pretty nervous,” he said.

Chrzanowski recited “Second Coming” by William Butler Yeats and “Ozyandias” by Percy Bysshe Shelley, and his performances earned him the top prize for the night. He will next perform at the central regional competition March 7 in Salem.

To prepare, Chrzanowski said he wrote both poems down on paper and practiced them as he walked to school each day.

“Both of them were pretty short, so they were easy to memorize,” he said.

When it came time to perform, Chrzanowski said he chose to use a lot of intensity and vocal dynamics to portray the theme of the poems.

“These poems are very dramatic,” he said. “I used an authoritative tone, and you kind of have to get a bit worked up.”

Herrera performed “Caged Bird” by Maya Angelou based on the book “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.” She then recited “Ecology” by Jack Collom. In each, Herrera said she found a deep connection to the poems.

“‘Caged Bird’ makes me think about how frustrated she must have been,” she said. “I can’t relate to the segregation part, but I can definitely identify with how she feels. I challenged myself to try to come to the level she’s at and try and portray to the audience what she was feeling.”

Even though Herrera said she had some experience public speaking in speech and debate, she was a bit nervous because she had never recited poetry before. She let her nerves work to her advantage, however, by allowing herself to get lost emotionally in her recitations.

“When I did ‘Caged Bird,’ her book is very deep,” she said. “I got a little choked up. I know what part of the book it was re-

ferring to when I was reciting the poem.”

Both competitors said they enjoyed competing. Chrzanowski said competing has helped him overcome his fear of public speaking.

“Having the opportunity at the high school level to do things like this when there is not a lot at stake is good practice,” he said. “It is useful for jobs, interviewing and many other things. Many jobs require the ability to speak in front of people.”

Herrera has already used her public-speaking experience in a larger context. This week, she and her fellow students in the Columbia Basin Student Homebuilding Program traveled to Salem and spoke before the Oregon House of Representatives about their experience and how it had impacted them and their school careers.

After competing Monday, speaking to Oregon’s legislators was easy, Herrera said, adding one told the students they should become lobbyists.

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