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tilla school.

Bernal said he is proud of his school and loves Umatilla, but the fact he doesn't have the same access to education as his sisters is heartbreaking.

"I want to be an engineer," he said. "I only get one chance at my education, one chance to be a kid and one chance to be a student. This is my chance. I need more help to become who I want to be in life."

Bernal said he wanted to testify before Oregon representatives so they could really understand how accepting a proposed state budget that isn't enough to maintain current programs, let alone adding ones not currently offered, would affect students just like him.

"When my sisters were in elementary school, they got to go to music class," he testified. "I have never even had a music teacher."

Bernal said, to achieve his dreams of becoming an engineer one day, he needs more teachers, more activities and more funding for his school.

"I promise you, I will give more when I am an adult," he told the legislators. "I will become a per-

son who will change this world for good. I am smart, I work hard, I give back to my town and I want to make this world a better place. But first, I need to finish school. I know other people helped you become who you are today. Can you please help me become who I want to be tomorrow?"

Bernal attended the meeting with Umatilla Superintendent Heidi Sipe and McNary Heights fifth-grade teacher Doug Gall, who both testified about what would happen if the \$7.235 billion K-12 education budget was approved through the state. Sipe said the current proposed budget amounts to about \$500,000 less than what the district received this year.

"As I testified on Tuesday, I honestly can't wrap my brain around that," she told the Umatilla School Board Thursday during their regular meeting. "I don't know where we could possibly even begin. Of course, I have some ideas, but none of them are even remotely good. We are already cut to the absolute bare bones. So, at this point, it is major, major (decisions) again."

Sipe said many legislators believe that school districts fared better in this biennium. She said, howev-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

McNary Heights Elementary School fifth-grader Alfonso Bernal testifies before the Oregon Ways and Means education subcommittee about the need for more school funding Tuesday in Salem.

er, it was a big win in that the district didn't have to lay off more people.

"It wasn't a big win as far as more money goes,"

she said.

Sipe said the Umatilla School District has made cuts every year since the recession began, except for

the last two years. In the last two years, however, the district hasn't been able to hire staff to fill positions or add programs cut.

"There were some surprised expressions when I was testifying and explained all we had cut and that we hadn't added those things back yet," she said.

Sipe said if the budget is approved as proposed, the district will be dealing with another challenge. Sipe said she was notified by an Oregon Department of Education official this week that the district's poverty rate had dropped by 10.2 percent as calculated by U.S. Census data.

"That is all our federal dollars that is based off of that," she said. "So, now, we are being told to brace for a 10 to 15 percent reduction of all our federal programs, and we are no longer eligible for a lot of low-income

schools grants."

Sipe said those dollars amount to roughly \$50,000 to \$60,000 in Title I funds, in addition to other grants.

Sipe said what is frustrating is the district's poverty rate probably didn't drop as much what the census data indicated, something the district has encountered before. She said, in the census prior to this last one, officials skipped an entire poverty-stricken area by the river that has a lot of low-income housing, and the district had to wait another 10 years before that was corrected.

Sipe said state legislators are expected to pass the budget over spring break because the co-chairs are fast-tracking the measure. She said, for the school district to remain stable, the budget needs to be \$7.5 billion.

AESTHETICS:

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the property, would be able to make alternative enhancements. Those include hanging baskets, fountains, decorative lighting, planter boxes, outdoor seating and other features approved by city staff, according to the draft ordinance.

The commissioners discussed the proposed requirements and offered several suggestions, such as extending the four-month deferred installation period to ensure people would not have to landscape in the winter.

Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center Director and Planning Commission member Phil Hamm recommended including a list of desirable trees, along with those that are prohibited, in a draft reference handbook for applicants that Spencer had prepared. Hamm also recommended including maintenance tips to ensure the landscaping elements would be successful.

Commissioner Kathy Erz said the requirements needed to be well thought out, rather than just mandates, because of the costs they would require.

"I really don't like this as a landowner," she said. "Landscaping is expensive. ... It's just another burden to discourage people."

Spencer said previous attempts to create landscaping requirements were abandoned because of the expense to developers.

Commission Chairperson Margaret Saylor said Hermiston has been "way behind" on creating landscaping requirements, and although they would only apply to new developments or expansions, an ordinance would help make the city more attractive.

"We do need to make things look nice," she said. "We need to make them look like they're there and they've got some beautification to them. I think a lot of this is a great idea."

Hamm said he believed the requirements could be established in a way that minimized the expense, while maximizing the benefit.

"I'm very mindful of the cost, but, at the same time, with a new construction, there's at least an opportunity to take care of some of the issues of making it look nice," he said. "... There should be a balance where we get the beautification that we want while, at the same time, trying to keep in mind the cost of initially putting it in and the long-term care of it, and I don't know where it is, that balance."

Spencer said he would continue working on the proposed ordinance and reference handbook.



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