

LOCAL WEATHER

DISTRICT

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was ranked 14th lowest in the state for students knowing letter names and 15th lowest for letter sounds. Smith said 60 percent of students in the state enter school without any formal preschool education, and he expects that number is higher in Hermiston, with well over half, and closer to three-quarters of Hermiston students, not having access to early education opportunities.

"We've been exploring this for a number of years," Smith said of expanding services to target 4-year-olds.

While the school district has offered Little Steps — a preschool option offered once or twice a month for many years — it has been unable to expand that program because of space and financial constraints, Smith said. By moving the district's administration and support services to another facility in the city, one of the three administrative buildings next to Rocky Heights Elementary School — the one where the School Board meetings currently take place — will be used for the preschool. Head Start is leasing the other two buildings for its own programs.

Smith said the school district is now in better financial position to start such a program. Because

Head Start has experience in early education programs for children whose families live in poverty, partnering with Head Start to run the program made sense.

Smith said the school district will pay Head Start to run the program. He said the district has budgeted \$180,000 — \$90,000 coming from the general fund and the rest from federal Title I grants — for the first year, which includes hiring two teachers and a coordinator, as well as paying for supplies, remodeling costs and transportation services. Smith estimates continued costs after the first year will be about \$130,000 to \$140,000 annually.

The current plan is for two Head Start teachers to teach four, half-day classes of 20 children — serving approximately 80 students from Sept. 1 through June 10, 2016. The curriculum taught will correspond with Oregon early learning standards as well as Hermiston School District Essential Standards.

Smith said Head Start administration has indicated the program has 80 children from Hermiston on a waiting list, and they will target those students first for the preschool program. Smith said Head Start staff will also determine eligibility based on poverty level because the school district wants to target children who do not qualify for Head Start or whose fam-

ilies cannot pay for other area preschool options.

"We're trying to reach those kids in most need of formal training and formal instruction," he said.

According to a press release, in addition to academic skills, the center will provide other care to students and families, including screenings, referrals and resources for parent education classes in both English and Spanish. Smith said, while the center will be a small step in the right direction, he wouldn't be surprised if there are requests to expand the program to accommodate more students in future years.

"I'm expecting it's going to be a program that's going to grow in popularity and interest among our families," he said.

Smith said, despite the cost of the program, the district expects the preschool will be a worthwhile investment because studies show every \$1 spent on pre-kindergarten education pays off eight-fold. In that regard, Smith said the district hopes, by offering preschool, it will recoup some its costs on the back end by not having to spend so much money on remediation for students later in their education.

"That'll be our test and our journey as we dip our toe in the water with pre-kindergarten learning in the Hermiston School District," he said.

CODE

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pilot program focusing on a team approach to code enforcement.

Fetter said 1,221 code violations were reported in 2014, which were handled solely by the police department's one half-time code enforcement officer. With the new program, officials from other city departments will assist with certain issues within their areas of expertise.

"Code enforcement will still be an activity of the police department, and we will still have our primary code enforcement officer, Mike Marcum, ... (but) we will be reaching out to other departments as is necessary to put emphasis on those things City Council has determined are a priority," Fetter said. "For example, if there is an illegal construction going on ... we would then coordinate that effort with the Building Department to make sure that it came into compliance."

Fetter said different departments would contribute based on each individual situation.

He said he plans to prioritize several issues to proactively focus on first. The next step, he said, would be informing people about the codes in an effort to gain voluntary compliance from offenders.

"The first strategy is to educate, so it's educating our staff and educating the

public as to what the code is because, quite honestly, most people don't know," Fetter said. "... When that fails, you just keep moving down the spectrum to citation and, eventually, some kind of abatement."

The city currently has the ability to hire contractors to clean up code violations and place a lien on the offenders' property to cover the cost, Fetter said. Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston, who supports the new team code enforcement approach, said the city has claimed about \$26,000 in code enforcement liens during the last two years.

Fetter said the benefits of code compliance are extensive and range from eliminating fire hazards to reducing health risks from rodent infestations, as well as enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the city.

He said he has previous experience with code enforcement from other jobs, and he is highly motivated to make this program successful.

"I look at it like it's a marathon, not a sprint," he said. "There will be some short-term benefits, but, really, it's any city's ability to be committed to these values over the long term because these are ongoing issues. The health of a community is dependent on a community's interest in taking care of itself. Our council has recognized that by giving code enforcement a very high priority."

TAXIS

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has grown from 4,500 to 17,345 during that time, the exclusive franchise was no longer necessary and that competition would provide better service to patrons.

Hermiston Transit employee Sean Robinson said, however, the business was "barely surviving" now and that the employees are dedicated to serving their customers.

Mayor Dave Drotzmann said he has used Hermiston Transit on several occasions and had received satisfactory service. He said most other businesses compete in the free market, and Hermiston Transit should not be afraid of competition.

Councilman John Kirwan agreed.

"Free market society is the society we live in," he said.

Morgan said the licensing program would set annual fees of \$50 per company and \$25 per driver. He said background checks would be required. The companies must provide service for 18 hours per day, which is also required in the current exclusive agreement, he said.

Morgan said no changes will be made to the Senior and Disabled Transit Program, for which qualifying riders can purchase \$2 tickets at City Hall for one-way taxi trips. He said riders will now be able to choose which licensed taxi provider in the city to use for the service,

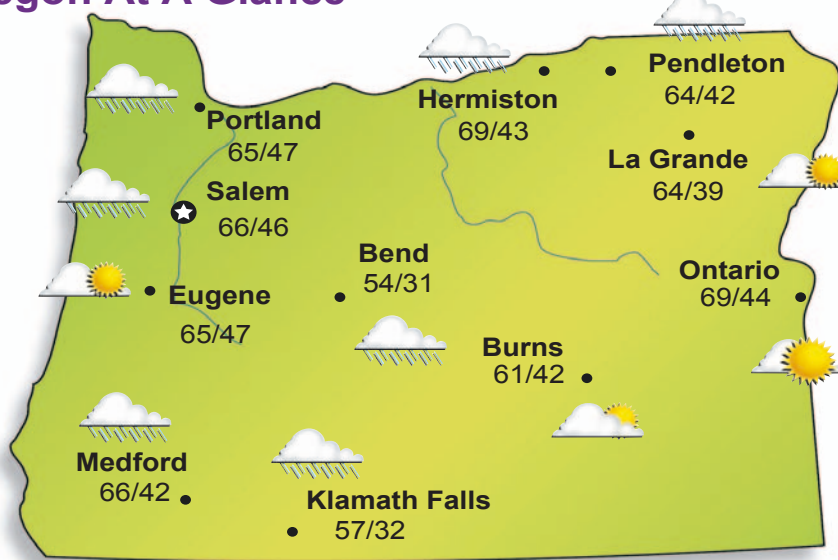
Today's Weather

Local 5-Day Forecast

Wed 5/13	Thu 5/14	Fri 5/15	Sat 5/16	Sun 5/17
69/43	75/50	75/49	76/48	75/48
Rain early. A mix of sun and clouds in the afternoon. High 69F.	Mix of sun and clouds. Highs in the mid 70s and lows in the low 50s.	Showers possible. Highs in the mid 70s and lows in the upper 40s.	Clouds giving way to sun. Highs in the mid 70s and lows in the upper 40s.	A few morning showers. Highs in the mid 70s and lows in the upper 40s.
Sunrise 5:27 AM Sunset 8:19 PM	Sunrise 5:26 AM Sunset 8:20 PM	Sunrise 5:25 AM Sunset 8:22 PM	Sunrise 5:24 AM Sunset 8:23 PM	Sunrise 5:23 AM Sunset 8:24 PM

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Oregon At A Glance



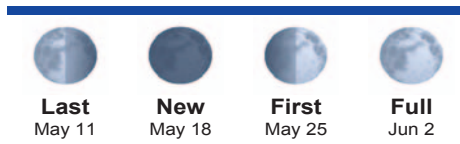
Area Cities

City	Hi	Lo	Cond.	City	Hi	Lo	Cond.	City	Hi	Lo	Cond.
Albany	67	47	rain	Florence	60	44	cloudy	Newport	56	45	rain
Ashland	64	40	rain	Grants Pass	68	44	rain	Pendleton	64	42	rain
Astoria	57	43	rain	Hermiston	69	43	rain	Portland	65	47	rain
Baker City	64	36	pt sunny	John Day	61	39	pt sunny	Redmond	62	37	mst sunny
Bend	54	31	rain	Klamath Falls	57	32	rain	Roseburg	68	48	pt sunny
Brookings	57	45	cloudy	La Grande	64	39	pt sunny	Salem	66	46	rain
Burns	61	42	cloudy	Lakeview	58	30	cloudy	Springfield	65	45	pt sunny
Coos Bay	58	46	pt sunny	Lincoln City	58	47	rain	The Dalles	67	48	pt sunny
Corvallis	66	45	rain	Mcminnville	65	45	rain	Tillamook	59	43	cloudy
Eugene	65	47	pt sunny	Medford	66	42	rain	Vale	69	45	mst sunny

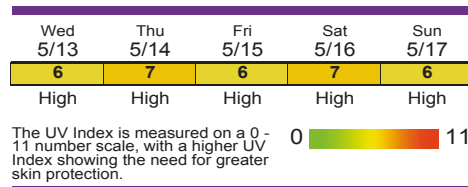
National Cities

City	Hi	Lo	Cond.	City	Hi	Lo	Cond.	City	Hi	Lo	Cond.
Atlanta	87	60	pt sunny	Houston	83	73	cloudy	Phoenix	87	60	mst sunny
Boston	62	48	windy	Los Angeles	68	54	pt sunny	San Francisco	62	52	pt sunny
Chicago	55	43	sunny	Miami	86	76	pt sunny	Seattle	60	48	rain
Dallas	76	69	rain	Minneapolis	66	51	cloudy	St. Louis	76	59	mst sunny
Denver	68	45	cloudy	New York	68	51	windy	Washington, DC	72	52	pt sunny

Moon Phases



UV Index



and the city will pay those companies \$6.15 per ticket redeemed.

In other City Council news:

The council opted to move forward with the city-owned natural gas utility that would service Hermiston's southern industrial area. City Manager Byron Smith said city officials will consult with experts to better determine the operating costs for the project. He said the initial estimate to construct a transmission line is \$3.2 million and that

officials are researching funding options, including money from the state. The city would also recover costs cost by charging transmission fees to the industrial customers. Morgan said the gas service to the area is currently "maxed out," and any new development that uses even minimal amounts gas would require an investment of about \$2 million to upgrade the capacity with the current provide, Cascade Natural Gas. Smith said the city should take "more of a leadership role" to ensure

the industrial area has the gas capacity to attract new investment and jobs.

In the consent agenda, council members filled multiple committee positions: Carleen Flaiz, Margaret Saylor and Derek Caplinger, Planning Commission; Joana Hayden and Fred Allen, Budget Committee; Mike Botti, Recreation Projects Fund Advisory Committee; Hector Ramirez, Hispanic Advisory Committee; and David Bothum, Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center Authority Board.

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