

Resuse authority discusses new timeline on acquiring depot land

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The U.S. Army keeps moving the line on when it will be ready to transfer the former Umatilla Chemical Depot land back to local control but the Columbia Development Authority is doing what it can to be ready.

The authority met Thursday, July 30, and discussed the current timeline the Army has set, which would see final conveyance of the land to the authority on Nov. 1, 2016. The authority had originally planned to receive the land in early 2015.

Executive director Greg Smith told the board that there are three outstanding issues that are holding up the Economic Development Conveyance. The necessary water rights to develop the land must be transferred to the authority, survey work must be wrapped up and cultural and environmental studies must be completed.

He said he recently traveled to Washington, D.C. for an Association of Defense Communities conference and emphasized to Army officials that the delays were negatively impacting the Columbia Development Authority.

"I shared that we had several economic development opportunities out there and that those are being hamstrung," Smith said.

He said the people he spoke with were concerned about the potential loss of

economic development opportunities and told him that they wanted to do what they could to help get things moving.

The most recent timeline Smith was given by the Army would have water rights negotiations finished by Oct. 1 and the cultural survey complete by Feb. 10, 2016. The Army would

LAND

begin a 30-day public comment period on the required Finding of Suitability to Transfer on May 18, 2016 and final drafts of the land deed, memorandum of understanding and Economic Development Conveyance would be ready for a signature on Nov. 1, 2016.

Board member Gary Neal, who represents the Port of Morrow, said putting political pressure on the situation may help some, but what will be most helpful in trying to move the timeline up is to make sure nothing is standing in the way of completing the cultural and environmental studies as quickly as possible.

"Those are going to be the key factors on this thing," he said. "We have to make sure they don't slide."

In the meantime the local reuse authority is doing what it can to move things along, including hiring Smith to replace former director Don Chance, who retired this summer. Smith said Army officials couldn't say enough good things about Chance and

told Smith that an application he submitted was so well written that it was going to be used as a template for other communities around the country.

Moving forward, Smith told the authority it was time to start revving up the marketing and outreach arm of the project in preparation for next year when the depot land will officially belong to the Columbia Development Authority. To start suggested creating a more user-friendly website, joining area Chamber of Commerces and creating an email database to which updates and newsletters can be sent.

The board supported his ideas, and also voted to approve the grant narrative and budget summary the CDA staff had put together. Smith said the good news is the authority can continue to receive grant money for completing the transition to ownership of the depot land even though it was originally supposed to have the land by now.

The Columbia Development Authority also listened to a presentation from J.R. Cook and Craig Reeder of the Northeast Oregon Water Association about an opportunity to boost the amount of water available for use in the area by placing an aquifer recharge basin on the depot land.

The project would take up about 10 acres of space somewhere on the depot land. Reeder said the basin would make it less cost-prohibitive to pump Columbia River water back into distressed basalt aquifers, making more groundwater available for use by Westland Irrigation's approximately 250 users.

"This is going to impact and extend the season for a majority of Westland Irrigation users," he said. Cook said the project would also improve the water picture for the depot land. The authority board voted unanimously (with an abstention by Gary Neal) to submit an application for a grant to cover the costs of a feasibility study for the recharge basin.

BMCC raises price for college credits for high school students

By **SEAN HART**
Staff writer

College credits for local high school students will cost three times more in the coming year than previous years.

Blue Mountain Community College Vice President of Instruction Jim Whittaker said the school is raising the price from \$10 to \$31 per credit because of the loss of state funding.

To help establish the program called Eastern Promise, Whittaker said temporary funding was provided to the collaboration between Eastern Oregon University, Treasure Valley Community College, the InterMountain Education Service District and school districts in Eastern Oregon. He said college officials knew the funding would be discontinued but were unaware it would happen this year until the end of the legislative session.

The cost will be lower than the \$94 per credit charged for classes at the college. Whittaker said the new price was based on his calculations that it costs the college about one-third as much to administer the early college credits for high school classes.

"We put our funding as low as we thought we could to recover our costs," he said. "It wouldn't surprise me if enrollment went down a little bit. On the other hand, it's still the best deal you can get for college credits."

Hermiston School District Deputy Superintendent Wade Smith said the fee increase would have a "significant impact" on the district, which pays the cost of tuition for students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

According to BMCC, Hermiston students earned 6,463 credits last school year. Smith said more than half of the students in the district qualify for reduced-price meals, so he estimated the district would cover about half of the college credits. At \$31 per credit, that would cost the district more than \$100,000.

Smith said the district may have to consider reducing the credits it funds, which could reduce student participation.

Every high school in Umatilla and Morrow counties has participated in the program, Whittaker said, with 2,410 students earning 21,424 credits last school year.

District registers students this week

HERMISTON HERALD

Hermiston School District student registration for the upcoming school year is taking place through Friday.

Previously enrolled elementary and middle school students returning to the district are not required to register at the school unless the family has moved over the summer. Parents or guardians whose contact information has changed should contact the school's front office with updates.

Elementary students new to the district, or new to a building, should register at the individual buildings. Front office staff will be available from 8-11:30 a.m.

Registration for new middle school students will take place from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the respective middle school buildings.

Registration for Hermiston High School students takes place from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. or 4-7 p.m. each day of the week depending on grade level. Registration for freshman and senior took place earlier this week. Registration for juniors is today and for sophomores on Thursday. High school students new to

the district should register between 8 a.m. and noon Aug. 7.

Parents or guardians enrolling new students should provide a record of the student's birth (birth certificate, baptismal certificate or passport), proof of residence and physical address, health records and previous report cards or transcripts.

Fees for middle and high school students can be paid during registration by credit card, check or cash. The payments can also be made through InTouch online at www.hermiston.k12.or.us/onlinepayments.

Parents or guardians who require different registration times should contact the buildings directly to schedule an appointment. Spanish translation services are available.

For more information, contact the schools: Hermiston High School, 541-667-6100; Armand Larive Middle School, 541-667-6200; Sandstone Middle School, 541-667-6300; Desert View Elementary, 541-667-6900; Highland Hills Elementary, 541-667-6500; Rocky Heights Elementary, 541-667-6600; Sunset Elementary, 541-667-6700; West Park Elementary, 541-667-6800.

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 Event dates were incorrectly posted in the Umatilla County Fair Exhibitor's Guide, these are the correct dates for the events