

Council could put marijuana question to voters

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

A resolution adopted by the Hermiston City Council Monday could pave the way for a marijuana dispensary ban to go before voters in 2016.

The resolution directed city staff to start the legal

VOTE

process of public hearings and state approvals to amend the city's land use ordinance to include a ban on all commercial marijuana activity, including businesses that grow, sell, store and process the drug.

At that point, the council could choose to adopt the ordinance themselves or place it on the November 2016 ballot.

City Councilor John Kirwan said he didn't feel comfortable voting on a ban when the council had the option to let the people decide directly under House Bill 3400.

"I firmly feel we should put it before the voters," he said.

Last November, 62 percent of Hermiston voters who turned out for the elec-

tion voted against legalizing recreational marijuana. Kirwan said turnout will likely be higher during a presidential election and when there is a local marijuana issue on the ballot.

Mayor David Drotzmann questioned why the city even needed a vote when the council had already voted last year to prohibit any land use that doesn't comply with federal law. But City Manager Byron Smith said staff felt that as more states legalize marijuana use the federal government could decide to legalize the drug, which would open the door for dispensaries.

"This is a second layer of protection," he said.

The council voted unanimously for staff to start drafting a ban on marijuana-related businesses. Later in the process, after the city has taken input through public hearings, the council will vote whether to approve the ordinance themselves or put it before the voters. If the voters are allowed to decide in November 2016, no dispensaries will be able to set up shop before the vote.

Pilot walks away from flipped plane

A pilot survived a hard landing in Morrow County last week, according to a press release from the Morrow County Sheriff's Office.

On Tuesday, police received a report that a plane appeared to have flipped in a crash landing near the Jepsen ranch in south

Morrow County.

Steven Huggins, of Beavercreek, lost control of his light plane while landing on a small private runway beside Liberty School Road. The plane flipped and landed upside down. Huggins walked away from the crash

with minor injuries and has notified the National Transportation Safety Board of the incident.

Morrow County Sheriff's Office will not conduct an investigation into the hard landing, as it is under the purview of the NTSB.

Aquatic center in need of repairs

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The Hermiston Family Aquatic Center is beginning to show its age.

Parks and Recreation Director Larry Fetter gave city councilors a tour of the facility Monday night, pointing out areas in need of significant repair.

The pool's most noticeable defect was the boiler that heats water for showers. After the boiler sprung a leak, the city was not able to get it re-certified for municipal pool use, causing swimmers to put up with cold showers or skip them altogether for most of the summer.

Fetter said the pool, which first opened in 2004, is no longer brand new and it is time that the city started thinking about creating a reserve fund for large repairs that will inevitably start cropping up.

"If we had had a reserve, we would have had showers this summer," Fetter said.

Fortunately, the pool could survive without hot showers, he said, but if a maintenance problem ends up shutting down the pool for a month during its three-month sea-

son, that will be a major blow to its budget.

Instead of replacing the boiler, Fetter proposed putting solar panels on the picnic shelter roof to heat water for the showers. The panels would cost \$50,000 instead of the \$8,500 to replace the boiler, but they would save \$18,000 a year in natural gas, allowing the city to recoup its investment in three years.

The downside would be that the hot showers would be dependent on the weather, but Fetter pointed out that the pool only operates during the sunniest months of the year.

"We get a ton of UV," he said. "Especially this summer, we wouldn't have had a problem at all."

Fetter pointed out a second repair he hopes the city will pay for before the 2016 swim season. The tiles around the gutter system for the multi-use pool are covered in rust because the water has made its way through the tile to the rebar holding up the pool walls, causing internal damage that Fetter compared to a cavity in a tooth. He proposed spending \$40,000 to grind out the damage inside

the pool lip and replace it with something that will hold up better and be easier to clean than the tile.

"There really is no part of this gutter system that isn't affected to some degree," he said.

The work would take about two weeks to do and could be performed in the spring in time for the pool to open for the next summer.

Fetter also pointed out a smaller repair that will cost less than \$5,000 and will be completed this fall. A significant water leak under the pool deck near the water slides has been draining water from the pool and needs to be dug up and patched.

"We've lost a lot of water, and it's expensive water because it's heated and chlorinated," he said.

Fetter urged the City Council to consider creating a reserve fund to cover pool maintenance above and beyond routine things like new paint. He said if the city pulled \$20,000 a year aside from the Transient Room Tax fund it could still meet its bond obligation, which the city will not pay off until 2033.



STAFF PHOTO BY GARY L. WEST

Caution tape surrounds a fire-damaged unit at Foxwood Apartments on Orchard Avenue near 11th Street on Tuesday, Aug. 25. Heat from the fire also damaged siding on the adjacent unit.

Fire displaces man at Foxwood Apartments, two other apartments damaged by smoke

HERMISTON HERALD

A fire at the Foxwood Apartments on Orchard Avenue in Hermiston early Sunday morning displaced one person.

Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services responded to a report of a residential fire at 3:13 a.m. that had started on the porch of a one-story apartment in the 1000 block of Orchard Avenue.

Fire marshal Tom Bohm said the fire started in the vicinity of an ash-tray sitting on the porch. He said the resident woke up to the sound of a smoke detector going off, saw the fire on the front porch and exited out the back.

Bohm said the front of the apartment was "severely damaged," there was smoke and water damage inside the apartment, the attic was damaged and the department had to cut a hole in a wall. Two apartments on either side also sustained some smoke and heat damage.

The Red Cross provided lodging, food and clothing to the man displaced by the fire.

There were no injuries and mutual aid was provided by Stanfield Fire District and Umatilla Fire Department.

According to a post on the department's Facebook page, the call came in on a busy night when the department was in the process of responding to a car crash, but personnel still responded in nine minutes and "C-Shift did a fantastic job handling these emergencies and stopping the fire before it could spread to other units."

Police respond to multiple related disturbances

By **SEAN HART**
Staff Writer

A string of reported disturbances Wednesday evening, Aug. 19, in Hermiston resulted in a warrant arrest and an underage alcohol citation.

Kylee Flores, a 19-year-old from Hermiston, was arrested on a Hermiston Municipal Court warrant, booked and released, and Joshua Hughes, an 18-year-old from Umatilla, was issued a citation for minor in possession of alcohol and released, according to information from Hermiston police chief Jason Edmiston. Several disturbances involving some of the same people were reported at several locations throughout the evening, he said.

At about 7:30 p.m., officers were dispatched to the area of Northwest 11th Street and West Ridgeway

Avenue for a report of a group of males preparing to fight. The officer's report states the subjects left when they noticed they were being photographed.

Later, officers conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle involved in the previous reported disturbance. Dakota Kamna, a 23-year-old from Irrigon, and Hughes were contacted in the car, according to the officer's report, and Shawn Mayes, a 22-year-old from Hermiston, walked away from the vehicle and was contacted on Sunland Avenue. The officer reported Mayes became argumentative about being held until the person who reported the 7:30 p.m. disturbance could be contacted about the incident. When that person was contacted, no crime was reported, so Mayes was released,

according to the report.

At about 9:15 p.m., officers were dispatched to a report of several people arguing and fighting inside a residence on the 1100 block of West Sunland Avenue. An officer reported Hughes and Landon Piel, a 23-year-old from Hermiston, were in the front yard, and Piel refused medical assistance for an injury to his face, stating he had a dispute with a friend and did not want to pursue charges. The officer's report states Hughes was issued the minor in possession citation, and Flores was arrested there for the outstanding warrant. She was later booked at the Hermiston Safety Center, issued a citation for the warrant, advised of her court date and released, the report states.

At about 10:15 p.m., of-

ficers were dispatched to a report of a verbal confrontation on the 400 block of West Ridgeway Avenue. Mayes was among the people contacted, and he again became argumentative about the police presence, according to the officer's report. His sister was advised to take him home because "further contacts would likely end him up in jail," according to the report.



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