

Rough crossing in Echo finally scheduled for fix

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

A rough railroad crossing in Echo is scheduled for maintenance this week after Mayor Richard Winter spent months trying to get it fixed.

A Union Pacific Railroad project bumped the crossing into Echo via DuPont Street out of alignment this spring, causing cars entering Echo to be greeted by a steel edge sticking up two to three inches above the asphalt.

Winter said the elevated edge hasn't been good for tires, and a city councilor told him the bump knocked his wheels out of alignment.

"We've had complaints," Winter said.

The mayor said he had been trying to get a response from Union Pacific since April.

On Friday Winter brought state Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, to Echo to see the crossing for himself. He said he was impressed by the



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL

Echo Mayor Richard Winter, left, shows Sen. Bill Hansell, right, the raised rail crossing into Echo that has been causing problems for cars.

state senator's willingness to lend a hand in trying to fix such a local issue.

Hansell said Winter called him "in frustration" in May and asked if there was anything he could do. He reached out to Union Pacific then and did so again after seeing the crossing.

"I'm no engineer, but the fix doesn't seem that

complicated," he said.

Winter said after he reached out to Prescott Mann, a rail crossing safety specialist with the Oregon Department of Transportation, last week Mann noted that the raised railroad crossing was also causing the asphalt around the tracks to crumble and said he would be creating a deficiency report.



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL

Inches of steel rail stick up above the asphalt at a rail crossing into Echo.

On Monday, Union Pacific media director Francisco Castillo said the grade crossing is scheduled for maintenance sometime this week to fix the problem.

"We sincerely apol-

ogize for any inconvenience this has caused the local community," he said in an email.

Castillo said safety is Union Pacific's first priority, and if anyone sees a damaged grade cross-

ing, signal malfunction, crossing blocked by vegetation or other issue they should alert the company to the problem by calling the Risk Management Call Center at 1-888-877-7267.

Teacher-student affair began on graduation day

No charges were filed because case didn't constitute a crime, based on witness statements

By **SEAN HART**
Staff Writer

A former Irrigon High School student told detectives she had sex on the morning of her graduation with a teacher who is now being investigated by the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission.

Jake McElligott, who taught at Armand Larive Middle School and coached the Hermiston High School boys basketball team last year, is on paid administrative leave during an unspecified

commission investigation, according to school district officials. The 35-year-old teacher previously worked for Morrow County School District and was the subject of a Morrow County Sheriff's Office investigation involving a possible sex crime that did not result in criminal charges.

McElligott has not responded to messages requesting a comment.

According to a report from the sheriff's office, the investigation began Sept. 4, 2014, when Morrow County School District Superintendent Dirk Dirksen advised the sheriff's office a staff member spoke to a former Irrigon High School student who admitted having a sexual relationship with McElligott, her former teacher and coach. A detective met



McElligott

with the woman who said the sexual relationship began in January 2014, half a year after she had graduated from Irrigon

High School.

A few days later, during a follow-up interview, the former student confessed to not being honest during her initial interview, the report states. She admitted to being sexually active with McElligott on the morning prior to her graduation from high school in 2013, though she was not a minor at that time. She said she had been in love with McElligott most of her senior year of high school, but he refused to talk with her about it or to allow her to state her feelings for him, insisting she had to

wait until she graduated. She also said she initiated their first sexual encounter.

The relationship continued through the summer, she said, and they were with each other again that winter and at least once during the following summer.

According to the report, the former student said she still had feelings for McElligott and did not want him to be in trouble. She said she was not innocent and knew what she was doing. She said McElligott was appropriate with her while she was a student and helped her through personal and family issues during her time in junior high and high school. She said McElligott followed a code in which he never gets involved with a student until they graduate and are over 18. She said she had signed her exit papers from

the school a week before graduation and did not believe she was a student at that time.

At the time of the September 2014 interview, the former student said McElligott was also sleeping with another former Irrigon High School student who graduated in 2014, according to the report. The detective attempted to contact the second person, who was also an adult at the time of her graduation, but the report states she did not respond to multiple messages.

The case was closed because there were no allegations of criminal conduct, but the detective recommended that the report be forwarded to the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission for investigation.

Oregon Administrative Rules state "any sexual

conduct with a student" is considered gross neglect of duty, for which the commission may initiate proceedings to suspend or revoke the educator's license.

The rules also state an ethical educator must "maintain an appropriate professional student-teacher relationship by: (a) not demonstrating or expressing professionally inappropriate interest in a student's personal life; (b) not accepting or giving or exchanging romantic or overly personal gifts or notes with a student; (c) reporting to the educator's supervisor if the educator has reason to believe a student is or may be becoming romantically attached to the educator; and (d) honoring appropriate adult boundaries with students in conduct and conversations at all times."

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 2**
HERMISTON BREAKFAST KIWANIS CLUB, 6:30 a.m., Umatilla-Morrow Head Start Center, 110 N.E. Fourth St.
WILLOW RUN LADIES GOLF CLUB, 8 a.m., rain or shine at the Willow Run Golf Course, Boardman. Participants do not need to be a member to play with the club. (541-481-4381).
NIMBLE THIMBLES QUILTERS, 10 a.m., 435 W. Hermiston Ave., Hermiston.
HERMISTON LION'S CLUB, noon, Desert Lanes Bowling Alley.
GREENFIELD GRANGE GWA, 1 p.m., at The Hall, 209 N.W. First St., Boardman.
HERMISTON ELKS DINNER, 5:30-8 p.m., 480 E. Main St.

- OREGON GRASS ROOTS CRIBBAGE CLUB NO. 2**, 6:30 p.m., Desert Lanes Bowling Alley, 1545 N. First St., Hermiston. All levels of players welcome. (541-567-6594).
BLUE MOUNTAIN A'S MODEL A FORD CLUB, 7 p.m., Pendleton City Hall community room, 501 S.W. Emigrant Ave. Anyone interested in learning about the Model A Ford is welcome. (Jim Smootz 541-276-2858).
THURSDAY, SEPT. 3
BOARDMAN KIWANIS, 6:45 a.m., Riverfront Lodge, 6 E. Marine Drive.
TUMBLEWEED TOASTMASTERS, 6:45 a.m., Conference Room 384, Good Shepherd Medical Center, 610 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston.

- Visitors welcome. (541-567-4349).
ARTS AND CRAFTS FROM THE DRY SIDE, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., basement of Assembly of God Church, 730 East Hurlburt Ave., Hermiston. Use the Seventh Street entrance. Monthly business meeting at noon. (541-567-4446).
UMATILLA DOG WALKING CLUB, 10 a.m., 630 Switzer St. at the dog wash in front of Umatilla High School.
ALTRUSA INTERNATIONAL OF HERMISTON, noon, ARC of Umatilla County, 215 W. Orchard Ave.
HERMISTON LINEBACKER CLUB, noon to 1 p.m., Desert Lanes, 1545 N. First St., Hermiston. Hear HHS football coach David Faeteete

- talk about the upcoming tilt against Hanford. RSVP by Wednesday at 3 p.m. to 541-567-5215. Cost is \$10 for members, \$12 for non-members.
HERMISTON ROTARY CLUB, noon, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church Parish Hall, Fifth Street and Locust Avenue.
HERMISTON HORSESHOE CLUB, 5 p.m., Weber Field, 600 S. First St., Hermiston. (Rick Rebman 541-720-6402).
ARC UMATILLA COUNTY BINGO, 6 p.m., doors open, bingo starts at 7 p.m., 215 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston. (541-567-7615).
KIWANIS OF ECHO, 6-7:30 p.m., Echo Masonic Hall, 200 S. DuPont St., Echo. Guests welcome. (echokiwanis@centurytel.net, 541-379-6992).

- INLAND NORTHWEST ORCHESTRA**, 6:30 p.m., Harris Jr. Academy, 3121 S.W. Hailey Ave., Pendleton. (Teresa Best 541-289-4696).
PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), 6:30 p.m., 1535 N.E. Gladys Drive, Hermiston. (541-571-1965).
HERMISTON ELKS, 7 p.m., 480 E. Main St.
UMATILLA SAGE RIDERS, 7 p.m., 81907 N. Highway 295, Hermiston. (541-561-0695).

- V.F.W. HERMISTON POST NO. 4750**, 7 p.m., 1888 W. Cherry St., Hermiston.
SATURDAY, SEPT. 5
BOARDMAN SENIORS COMMUNITY BREAKFAST, 7:30-11 a.m., Boardman Senior Center, 100 Tatone St.
MORROW UMATILLA RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Roosters Restaurant, 1515 Southgate.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Youth programs begin at Assembly of God

Faith-based youth programs designed to build character, learn new skills and have fun are starting up again at the Hermiston Assembly of God Church.

Open to all area youths, the offerings include the Hermiston Girls Club for ages 12-and-under, Royal Rangers for boys ages 12-and-under and the Tribe, which includes middle- and high- school age students. Upwards of 150 youths have participated weekly in the past.

"More than half the kids that come don't have any other church connection," said Rev. Terry Haight.

The programs begin for all age groups Wednesday, Sept. 9 at 6:30 p.m. at the church, 730 E. Hurlburt Ave., Hermiston. For those who need transportation, rides can be arranged.

The kickoff night for those ages 3 through fifth grade features a Round-Up theme. Those attending are encouraged

to wear their best cowboy duds. The event features prizes, games and food.

Similar to Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts, participants can earn merits and badges for activities. In addition to the weekly meetings, the program offers special activity nights, community projects and camping or sleepovers.

For more information or to request a ride, call 541-567-5831.

Emblem Club plans Parking Lot Sale

Tables to sell your wares are available during the Hermiston Emblem Club's Parking Lot Sale.

The event is Saturday, Sept. 12, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Hermiston Elks Lodge, 480 E. Main St.

Table space is \$10. For more information or to reserve a table, call

Teresa Moncrief at 541-564-0887.





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