



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

City staff have removed the six-foot security fence topped with barbed wire that lined the south side of Sunset Park and now plan to remove the driveway pictured in the background, connecting the park to the lot on the other side.

Sunset Park expansion begins

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Children and families visiting Sunset Park in Hermiston will have twice as much room to play after city employees are finished renovating the park.

Work began last week to tear out shorter chain link fences in front of the park and the forbidding six-foot security fences that previously lined the south side of the park.

Before winter weather hits, the city will also tear out

the asphalt driveway leading into the Public Works department from Fourth Street to move it to Elm Avenue, connecting the current Sunset Park area with an adjacent empty lot that the city recently purchased.

Parks and Recreation director Larry Fetter said the effect will be a larger, more welcoming park.

"It will feel twice the size," he said.

He is currently pursuing grants to put new playground equipment at the park and to

add a basketball court or other sport court.

Right now Sunset Park, located east of Northeast Fourth Street between Elm Avenue and Willow Court, doesn't give off the friendliest vibe, Fetter said, which discourages some potential use. In addition to major improvements like new park equipment he said replacing chain link fence with attractive landscaping, improving irrigation, adding a detention pond to address flooding and working to signalize the

crosswalk leading to the park should increase the number of people using the park.

"All of that combined should make it a much more inviting park," he said.

Fetter said the extra lot purchased to expand the park only cost the city \$20,000 and he is using in-house Parks and Recreation staff to perform the work of renovating the park to keep costs down.

Walkways and extra landscaping will be added to the park in the spring.

Hansell looks to next legislative session

Senator also gives his assessment of session

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

As Sen. Bill Hansell (R-Athena) performs a final round of postmortems on the 2015 legislative session, he also has an eye on the future.

During a town hall at Nookies Restaurant in Hermiston on Monday, he said he hasn't decided for sure what issues he will address during the short session in February, but he is interested in creating a bill that would ask Union Pacific to pay more toward fire suppression.

Hansell said constituents in Morrow County recently alerted him to the fact that the railroad company is exempt from paying property taxes toward lighting districts, road improvement districts and fire districts.

"We all know trains start fires," he said.

Hansell said his office was in the process of researching the original reasoning for exempting Union Pacific for paying taxes to support fire districts, but it didn't seem fair that an entity that often caused fires wasn't helping pay rural fire districts to put them out.

Each senator gets only two bills to introduce during the "short session," which is intended to make tweaks to the budget and fix unforeseen problems caused by new laws rather than to introduce sweeping changes. Hansell said he was considering introducing wolf-related legislation for another bill and has set up a visit to Walla Walla County for Sen. Chris Edwards, chair of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, to discuss it.

In response to questions about what bills that failed in 2015 might come back in 2016, Hansell said he believes raising the minimum wage will end up being decided by a ballot measure, not a bill in February. He also said legislative leaders have indicated the 35-day session isn't enough time to try to resurrect the transportation package but that it "will be in the forefront of 2017."

Hansell characterized the 2015 session as the "good, the bad and the ugly." He hailed accomplishments like the water

funding package that will increase agricultural irrigation in the Umatilla Basin.

He also said veteran colleagues told him it was the most partisan session they had ever seen.

"We passed bills I don't think are good for business; we passed bills that were not good for family values and parental rights," he said.

Hansell said unfortunately it seemed like many west-side Democrats didn't care that new regulations, like mandatory sick leave, hurt small businesses.

In response to a question about his opinion of Gov. Kate

Brown, Hansell said obviously from a policy standpoint Brown is much more liberal than he is. However, he also said she had proven very accessible and he admired how she handled being suddenly thrust into the role of governor during the middle of a legislative session when the "ship of state" had already set sail.

Hansell said one of Brown's early speaking opportunities as governor was brought about by Umatilla County growers' donation of almost 40 tons of potatoes and several hundred pounds of onions for what he plans to make the "first annual" Spud Day at the capitol.

Hansell said the Senate and the House compete annually to see which chamber can raise the most food for the governor's food drive for charity and the House always wins because it has so many more members.

When a Senate colleague joked this year that they should just bring in a truckload of potatoes to beat the House, Hansell said he took him at his word and helped arrange the donation from Bud Rich Potato and Amstad Farms.

"Needless to say the Senate absolutely walked away with the honors," Hansell said.

He said he made sure each of his colleagues got a five-pound bag of potatoes and five-pound bag of onions on their desk reminding them that the produce was a product of irrigation in the Umatilla Basin.

Despite the partisan nature of the 2015 session, Hansell said the donation from Umatilla County growers involved in Farmers Ending Hunger created "unbelievable goodwill."



Hansell

Presidio Brass kicks off Desert Arts season

By **TAMMY MALGESINI**
Community Editor

Celebrating the world of Hollywood, audience members can enjoy familiar songs as Presidio Brass opens the 2015-16 Desert Arts Council season.

The group presents jazz and classical music used in movies, film soundtracks and musicals with a brass quintet, piano and percussion instruments.

"There are going to be songs that are recognizable to people," said Mary Corp, past president of Desert Arts.

The unique sound of the San Diego-based group captivates audiences, added Phyllis Shovelski, Desert Arts president. People will be tapping their toes and cheering for more, she said.

Presidio Brass performs Saturday at 7 p.m. in the Hermiston High School auditorium, 600 S. First



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY DESERT ARTS COUNCIL

Presidio Brass opens the 2015-16 Desert Arts Council season Saturday in the Hermiston High School auditorium.

St. Tickets purchased in advance are \$35 for adults and \$17.50 for students. Tickets bought at the door are an additional \$5.

Corp and the rest of the Desert Arts Council are hoping more youths will attend the performance. To help expose them to high caliber musicians, Presidio Brass will present a master's class for Hermiston High School band members. The students, Corp

said, can learn more about career possibilities in the music industry and are encouraged to attend the evening performance.

"We're trying to increase the participation of this age bracket," she said. "We really enjoy the youthful audience. It adds a lot."

The program, titled "Sounds of the Cinema," provides an opportunity for the audience to walk

down memory lane. The high-energy performance, Corp said, features many familiar tunes with new arrangements.

Calling it first-class entertainment, Shovelski said people can expect a big dose of humor, creative artistry and sensitive moments.

"The music evokes a lot of memories," Corp added. "And they are very engaging with the audience, so that's always fun."

Ticket packages or single show tickets can be purchased at www.desertartscouncil.com. In addition, people can buy Presidio Brass tickets at the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce, 415 S. Highway 395, or Hermiston Parks & Recreation, 180 N.E. Second St.

For more information, visit www.facebook.com/desertarts or call 541-567-1800.

City puts potential pot-growing property owners on notice

The city of Hermiston has mailed more than 1,700 notices to commercial property owners about the effects of a proposed ordinance banning all commercial marijuana activity within the city limits.

The legal notice, required as part of the process to change the city's land use codes, states that the ban "may affect your property values."

A news release from the city clarified that the effect, if any, would come from

no longer being allowed to grow, process or sell marijuana on the property.

During its Aug. 24 meeting the city council directed staff to begin the process to update Hermiston codes for all zones to outlaw any land use not in compliance with state or federal laws. While marijuana was legalized in Oregon last year through Measure 91, it is still illegal at the federal level.

"Hermiston voters, and Umatilla County voters as

a whole, opposed Measure 91 by 62 percent," Byron Smith, the city manager, said in the news release. "The proposed ban therefore uses the allowances in Measure 91 to strengthen our existing marijuana prohibitions."

The Planning Com-

mission will hold a public hearing on the proposed ordinance at 7 p.m., Oct. 14, at City Hall, and the City Council will hold a public hearing on the issue at 7 p.m., Oct. 26, at City Hall. The full notice to property owners is available at www.hermiston.or.us.

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