



ABOUT TOWN

Umatilla ends city manager's contract

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The Umatilla City Council approved a transition plan Tuesday night that will end the contract of City Manager Bob Ward seven months early.

Current public works director Russ Pelleberg will be the new city manager in March.

The document was adopted by a vote of 4-1 after an executive session with a motion that noted the plan could be adjusted later by the city's personnel committee.

According to the document adopted into the record on Tuesday, Ward was originally set to retire in February 2017 but city councilors had expressed a desire for Pelleberg to assume the role of city manager on March 1, 2016.

The plan proposed that Ward stay on as city manager until March 1, then serve in a transitional capacity from March 1 to July 1, at which time his contract would be terminated "with buy-out provisions."

Under the plan Pelleberg would continue to serve as public works director in addition to becoming city manager, while finance director Melissa Ince would become deputy city manager in addition to her finance duties and public works supervisor Jason Barron would assume some additional responsibilities in the public works department.

Councilor Mary Dedrick voted in opposition of the plan and councilor Sharon Farnsworth was absent. Councilors Mel Ray, George Fenton, David Lougee and Roak Ten Eyck voted in favor.

Ward declined to comment after the meeting.

BMCC hires architect for bond projects

The Blue Mountain Community College Board of Education approved a contract with LKV Architects to design projects approved by voters in the May election.

The Boise firm will work with project manager Frew Development Group, hired after passage of BMCC's \$23 million bond.

LKV will work with stakeholder teams to design the three large projects — the Early Childhood Education/Workforce Training Center in Boardman, the Precision Irrigated Agriculture Center in Hermiston and the Facility for Agricultural Resource Management (FARM) in Pendleton.

First on the drawing board is the 13,300-square-foot Early Childhood Education/Workforce Training Center, with an estimated cost of \$4.7 million. The \$3.3 million Precision Irrigated Ag Center in Hermiston and the \$4.2 million FARM in Pendleton (a renovation of existing facilities) are in the schematic design stage.

All projects are expected to be completed by the fall of 2017.

TOUGH AS NAILS



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL

Rod Retherford stands in his new saddlemaking shop at Horse Plaza in Hermiston.

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Hermiston's newest saddlemaker may look unassuming, but in many ways his life story exemplifies what it means to be "cowboy tough."

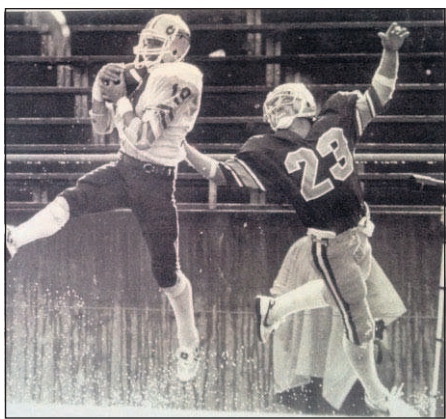
Rod Retherford moved his custom saddlemaking and cowboy art business to Hermiston two weeks ago. Decades before he was a saddlemaker, however, he had a college football career so unlikely that the story has been featured in newspapers, magazines, a documentary about Washington State University and a novel by John A. Kuri simply titled "Rod."

"It's been an interesting ride, my life so far," Retherford said. Nobody looking at Retherford on his first day of high school would have thought he would someday play in the Holiday Bowl for a Pac-10 team. At 4-feet, 11-inches tall and less than 90 pounds, Retherford said John Day's football coach took one look at the tiny freshman and said it didn't matter how hard he worked, he wasn't going to make the team.

"I was that little guy every school has that didn't develop and didn't grow," he said.

He persevered and made the team eventually, but his joy at getting to play football was undercut by a personal tragedy: At age 15 he watched his older brother Rick die under the hooves of a bucking bronco at the state high school rodeo finals.

Retherford said the loss of his



EUGENE REGISTER-GUARD PHOTO

This photo of Rod Retherford intercepting a pass at Autzen Stadium against the Oregon Ducks appeared in the Eugene Register-Guard in 1982 under the headline "Too Small Can't Play, Retherford wouldn't listen!"

brother cut him deep. Back then nobody in rural John Day ever talked about getting counseling after the death of a family member. So Retherford pushed through the grief on his own, suiting back up for football and continuing his own junior rodeo career as a bull rider.

He was 5-foot-4 and 130 pounds when he graduated, so Retherford figured that was the end of his football career. Three years later, however, after growing another seven inches and adding a few pounds, he started thinking maybe college football was in the cards after all.

"I thought I was huge," he said,

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY ROD RETHERFORD

Rod Retherford rides a bucking bronco at age 55 at the Grant County rodeo in 2012.

Hermiston hires specialists after leaving InterMountain ESD

By **SEAN HART**
Staff Writer

As Hermiston School District began its first school year after opting out of the InterMountain Education Service District, both agencies have tried to make the transition as seamless as possible.

Wade Smith, Hermiston's deputy superintendent, said the district is using the funds it is receiving from the opt-out — about \$1.9 million that would have gone to the ESD — to provide similar services. The goal was to increase continuity for students by hiring employees directly, he said.

"We have been fortunate, due to planning and leadership, to ensure a smooth transition for all of our students and programs, and are reaping the benefits of having ded-



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Third-grader Carlos Flores whispers an answer into educational assistant Elizabeth Earp's ear while participating in a teletherapy session Friday at Sunset Elementary School in Hermiston.

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