

Wishful predictions for the new year

New Year's Day is my favorite holiday. I look forward to the clock striking midnight on Dec. 31 with the anticipation children display when waiting for Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny or the Tooth Fairy. What will you bring me, oh new year?



Gary L. West
SHADES OF GRAY

The new year is full of promise and possibility, and at 12:01 a.m. Jan. 1, it is still unspoiled by the realities of life than can tarnish a shiny new year. Not that the wear doesn't give us character and experiences we will need to deal with other aspects of life. But, let's face it, reality isn't all that fun. In reality, there are bills, responsibilities, obligations and chores to perform.

Thinking about the potential of a new year is more like a daydream, caught up in the fantasy of what it might be like to win the lottery.

I've never been one to make new year's resolutions, probably because I know the things I think I want to accomplish in the new year are very different than the commitment and perseverance to do the hard work to change, particularly changing myself.

But this year, I make a few predictions, or requests, for what I'd like to see the community achieve in 2016.

So here are predictions/requests for 2016.

EOTEC name change

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center will start hosting some events in 2016 and constructions will continue in preparation to host the 2017 Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo. There are still financial arrangements to

be worked out and contributions from local donors will make a difference in just how much permanent facilities work is able to be done in the facilities' early setup.

The goal is to raise \$2 million dollars through private donations, which would be a little less than \$26 per person for every man, woman and child in Umatilla County, which is certainly attainable.

But the project needs a better, shorter name, not an acronym that makes it sound like a technology firm instead of an event center. Even shortening the name to Eastern Oregon Event Center would be better.

No acronym. Just a name. A name that explains its purpose would be great.

Improvements to 395

For years, local drivers have complained about the chaos that driving on Highway 395 through Hermiston has become. The complaints have only grown louder as the population of people, and corresponding traffic volume have increased. As the main route through town and primary business district, the number of businesses and driveways into them have increased. There are more places to turn and more cars turning into and out of those places. It's no longer sufficient to look left, then right, then left again before entering the lanes of travel. The Oregon Department of Transportation is going to install some permanent median barriers where the temporary traffic control posts were installed earlier this year at the intersection of Highway 395 and Elm Avenue.

It's a fix that is long

overdue, but it will mean delays and detours. So people will still have plenty to complain about when traveling Highway 395 through town during the 2016 construction season.

Tax dollars at work

Hermiston School District and the Hermiston and Stanfield fire districts will again be turning to voters to seek approval for changes in the way they do the public's business going forward and determining how taxpayer money is spent.

Hermiston School District will likely be seeking a new bond for school construction and/or renovation in early 2017. And the fire districts will once again attempt to officially merge. Take advantage of opportunities to learn about both

proposals and help shape what the education system and the fire/ambulance projects systems will look like in our future.

New motel

There will be a new motel in Hermiston by the end of the year and construction has already started. A new structure rising in the middle of town will certainly get noticed, but it should also be noted that at least two other motels in the area have also recently added rooms to their facilities. People are coming to Hermiston to do business, visit family and friends or participate in events and activities. That is certainly good for the hoteliers, local restaurants and retail businesses and the overall economy.

New brand same as the old brand?

The city of Hermiston may act on establishing a new brand this year. The city's "You can GROW here" slogan, particularly the way it was painted on the water tower on the southeast entrance to the city on Highway 395, drew complaints and snickers. Perhaps the slogan, or part of it anyway, can still be salvaged. The fact is, Hermiston's brand — its identity — is and always has been about growth, change and progress. It's about growth in numbers of people. It's about the agricultural products grown throughout the area. It's about keeping an eye open for opportunities and being willing to pursue them.

The desire to establish an official brand, with a look and a logo, is something one would expect from a larger city launching a tourism or marketing campaign to recruit new industry.

Such efforts are not inexpensive, though. Perhaps the city learned that lesson in its last branding campaign. At the very least, it will require a bigger expenditure in paint to repaint the whole water tower at once. A brand is, after all, about image and perception.

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MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 30
UMATILLA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, 9 a.m., Umatilla County Courthouse room 130, 216 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton.

THURSDAY, DEC. 31
No meetings scheduled

FRIDAY, JAN. 1
No meetings scheduled

MONDAY, JAN. 4
HEPPNER PLANNING COMMISSION, 7 p.m., Heppner City Hall, 111 N. Main St.

MORROW COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT, 7 p.m., Irrigon Medical Clinic, 220 N.E. Main St.

TUESDAY, JAN. 5
UMATILLA MORROW RADIO & DATA DISTRICT, 1:30 p.m., Boardman City Hall, 200 City Center Circle.

IRRIGON PLANNING COMMISSION, 6 p.m., Irrigon City Hall, 500 N.E. Main St.

BOARDMAN CITY COUNCIL, 7 p.m., Boardman City Hall, 200 City Center Circle.

STANFIELD CITY COUNCIL, 7 p.m., council chambers, 150 W. Coe St.

UMATILLA CITY COUNCIL, 7 p.m., Umatilla City Hall, 700 Sixth St.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 6
MORROW COUNTY COURT, 9 a.m., Port of Morrow, 2 Marine Drive, Boardman.

HERMISTON AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE, 4 p.m., Hermiston Airport lounge, 1600 Airport Way.

BLUE MOUNTAIN BOARD OF EDUCATION, 5 p.m. work session, 6 p.m. regular meeting, Blue Mountain Community College Pioneer Hall boardroom, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton.

UMATILLA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT, 7 p.m., 305 Willamette Ave., Umatilla (McNary).

MONDAY, JAN. 11
MORROW COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT SPECIAL WORK SESSION, 5 p.m., Sam Boardman Elementary School, 301 Wilson Lane, Boardman. The board will discuss the superintendent evaluation.

HERMISTON SCHOOL DISTRICT, 6:30 p.m., district office, 502 W. Standard Ave.

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