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ABOUT TOWN

Highway 395 project begins in Hermiston

Upgrades to the Highway 395 corridor through Hermiston began Monday.

The Oregon Department of Transportation announced the first step will install new traffic control signals at Jennie Avenue and upgrade the control systems at six other intersections.

This week, survey work began to upgrade 86 sidewalk ramps along the highway to meet updated ADA and safety standards.

The department plans to begin the re-paving part of the project, which will stretch from Southeast Fourth Street to Highway 730, in May. The majority of the work requiring lane closures will take place between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. to minimize disruption.

Updates on the project will be posted at www.tinyurl.com/ODOT-Region5.

Hermiston second-fastest growing school district in the state

Hermiston School District is the second-fastest growing school district in the state of Oregon, according to a report by the Oregon Department of Education.

The district grew at a rate of 3.71 percent over the last year, far surpassing the state average of .97 percent. It ranks as the 29th largest district out of 212 in the state.

Hermiston School District started the school year with more than 5,500 students. The growth of more than 200 students from the year before was more than double what a Portland State University study predicted, lending an even greater sense of urgency to the district's search for new ways to increase the capacity of its schools.

The district currently uses 24 modular classrooms to supplement its regular buildings, which is four more than were being used last time the district went for a bond measure.

TANGLED WEB OF AWARDS



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Debbie Pedro speaks after being named the Woman of the Year during the Hermiston Distinguished Citizens Awards Banquet on Wednesday in Hermiston.

AWARD WINNERS SURROUNDED BY FAMILY, FRIENDS AND LITTLE WHITE LIES

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

After years of sneaking around to make sure recipients at the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce Distinguished Citizens Awards were surprised by the honor, this year it was chamber director Debbie Pedro's turn to be surprised.

Pedro was named 2015 Woman of the Year at the end of Wednesday's banquet after master of ceremonies Bryan Wolfe "accidentally" mixed up the order of Man of the Year and Woman of the Year.

"I don't even know what to say because I'm so surprised," Pedro said, wiping away tears. "It took a lot to pull this off."

Rep. Greg Smith, who presented the award, said Pedro deserved it for the long list of civic involvement on her résumé and the significant amount of statewide recognition she has

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STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Bob Green, executive director of the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation, accepts the Spirit of Excellence Award during the Hermiston Distinguished Citizens Awards Banquet on Wednesday in Hermiston.

Council approves agreements for new traffic signal

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The Hermiston City Council approved two agreements Monday to install a traffic signal at the intersection of Highway 207 and Elm Avenue near Good Shepherd Medical Center.

Work on the project is scheduled to begin at the end of the year.

The redesign of the intersection will also add a lane that will allow drivers traveling south on Highway 207/11th Street to turn left into Good Shepherd Medical Center. A

concrete island will make it easier for pedestrians to cross the road between the hospital and the Oxbow Trail, and the work will also help relieve flooding problems at the entrance to the hospital campus.



Drotzmann

The total cost of the project will be about \$1.6 million. Half of that will be paid by an Oregon Department of Transportation grant, one fourth by the city and one fourth by Good Shepherd Healthcare System.

Mark Morgan, assistant city manager, said Good Shepherd expressed interest

in the project back in 2014. Expanding the hospital that year resulted in about 300 more trips through the intersection each day.

On Monday the council approved an agreement with ODOT to accept the grant, and approved a second agreement with Good Shepherd.

Morgan said shortly before work begins on the Elm Avenue intersection at the end of the year, ODOT will also be installing a traffic signal at the intersection of 11th Street and Orchard Avenue a few blocks south of the hospital.

In other council news, on Monday the council gave

approval to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center to take out a loan of up to \$1.5 million. The city and Umatilla County have each pledged to back the loan with full faith and credit.

The loan will be used to allow donors to spread large donations out over two to five years while giving EOTEC the upfront cash to finish construction in time for the 2017 Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo.

City Manager Byron Smith said the city's finance department felt comfortable backing the loan because the only money borrowed

would be the amount that donors had signed a legally-binding agreement to pay back.

"We are very comfortable the city will not ever have to act on that full faith and credit," he said.

The EOTEC fundraising committee has raised more than \$600,000 in the past couple months, toward a goal to raise \$2 million.

The final action the council took on Monday was to direct the city recorder to post notice about the upcoming filing deadline to run for mayor and municipal judge in the May

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