

# School district grants stay of demolition to Senior Center, rodeo grounds

Facilities will stay operational on current fairgrounds site until July 2017

By **JENNIFER COLTON**  
Staff Writer

The Hermiston Senior Center and the 2017 high school and college rodeos will operate in Hermiston on borrowed time during

2017. Monday night, the Hermiston School Board of Education agreed by consensus to extend the lease for the properties up until July 2017. The current agreements turn over control of the Umatilla County Fairgrounds property to the Hermiston School District in January 2017, and both the rodeo arena and the Hermiston Senior Center are slated for demolition. On April 5, Byron

Smith, chair of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center Authority Board, officially requested the school district hold off on its demolition schedule through at least May 15, when the rodeos will be completed. The Harkenrider Center, which replaces the current Senior Center, is scheduled for completion in July or August of 2017. Extending the lease until the end of July will give the district the bulk of August

to demolish the fairgrounds buildings before the 2017-18 school year begins in late August. Hermiston School District Superintendent Fred Maiocco said while the district could demolish the rodeo arena in May and the Senior Center in August, that would increase costs as a demolition crew would have to be engaged twice. "Our plan all along was to demolish everything, get it down to gravel," Maiocco

said. "When we mobilize the demolition crews, we want to do it all at one time." By consensus, the school board authorized Maiocco and other administration to negotiate extending the lease no later than July 30, 2017. In other business: The board approved an administrative transfer moving Larry Usher from principal at Sandstone Middle School to District Athletic Director. The principal

position has been posted as a district opening. Approved extra duty contracts and stipends for district fifth-grade teachers to handle Outdoor School duties. Accepted multiple coaching contracts and personnel appointments. Approved Tracy Hepworth as a member of the Hermiston Education Foundation. Approved a resolution in support of the Better Oregon Initiative.

## Event center main building opens next month

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center's grand opening for its first completed building has been set for May 13. Rob Drier of Frew Development Group reported to the EOTEC board on Friday that the event center building is essentially done, minus a few small fixes that came up during the punch list walkthrough and building inspection. But audio-visual equipment, signs, lighting and pavement are still in the works. The board had previously discussed an April 28 grand opening, but board chair Byron Smith suggested that the paving might not be done by then and that it would be better to hold off on officially scheduling the event. Frew Development Group CEO John Frew was in Hermiston for a visit, however, and urged the board to set a date right then and there. He said in his 20 years of managing projects like EOTEC, he had learned

that scheduling an event gave everyone the incentive they needed to meet the deadline. When another venue booked a concert six months before construction was finished, he said "no one wanted to be the one who made the concert not happen." "Uncertainty is our enemy," he said. "Make it happen." The board decided that the second Friday in May — eight days before the first event booked by a member of the public — was ideal. There was some trepidation and a few jokes when they realized that would fall on Friday the 13th, but in the end the board threw superstition to the wind. On Friday the board also awarded a bid for audio visual equipment to KlassTech Audio Visual Services of Beaverton. The company came in at the lowest of two bidders with a package of \$89,397. The bid included the installation of a variety of projectors, podiums, speakers, screens, microphones and other tech needed to run every-

thing from meetings to concerts in the building. No one from the fundraising committee was present, but Smith said they had raised between \$1.8 and \$1.9 million at last count. "They're very hopeful about some commitments they need to finalize so they're going to continue working past the April 1 deadline," he said. The money raised by the committee will allow EOTEC to build a third barn, permanent seats in the rodeo arena and utility hookups to the extended stay area, plus purchase its own animal pens. Smith also said that he talked with Hermiston School District about holding off on demolition of the rodeo arena at the current fairgrounds until after May 2017, so that the high school and college rodeos would not have to leave Hermiston for a year. The Hermiston School Board agreed to hold off demolition of the existing grounds and the Hermiston Center until next summer at its meeting Monday night.

## City examines options to pay for disposal of biosolids

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

A proposed new project at Hermiston's Recycled Water Treatment Plant would reduce operational costs and odor, but it would cost the city some cash upfront. City councilors discussed purchasing new equipment for handling biosolids during a work session Monday before directing staff to explore how to come up with the roughly \$750,000 to pay for it. The city also needs \$1 million to empty the plant's sewage lagoon, which will otherwise start overflowing soon. "If we have two months, you're lucky," plant supervisor Bill Schmittle told the council. The function of the Recycled Water Treatment Plant is to separate liquids from solids in the city's wastewater, then dispose of each separately. Brett Moore of civil engineering firm Anderson Perry and Associates told the council that the city's recent \$20 million upgrade of the plant resulted in a much better liquid handling process, churning out clean water into the Umatilla River and (once the permits come through) the West Irrigation District's main canal.

The upgrade didn't include the solids side of the plant, however, which still sends everything filtered out of the recycled water to be stored in an open-air lagoon behind the plant. The lagoon was last cleaned in 2014, when 855 tons of sewage were pulled out and taken to a landfill. But a growing population and better filtering means it already needs cleaned out again at a cost of about \$1,000 per ton. Moore said that side of the process works fine and meets all government standards, but the city is paying to store, haul and dump a lot more liquid mixed in with the solids than it needs to. He said if the city invested in dewatering equipment and a dump truck it could cut the cost per ton to \$350 and take a couple of loads of sewage to the landfill a week instead of storing it outdoors for years.

Moore told councilors the investment would pay for itself within three to four years and the equipment would last about 15 years. Not using the lagoon would also cut down on odors coming from the plant. "I think this deserves some critical attention for the money it could save the city," he said. Moore said he had some preliminary discussions with local growers and some of them were interested in using the biosolids to enrich their soil instead of seeing it sent to a landfill. Currently the landfill charges the city \$16 per ton to dump it. Moore said the city would have to weigh the cost of staff time for going through the DEQ permitting and soil testing processes if it cooperated with growers.

### IN BRIEF

#### IRS phone scams reported in Hermiston area

The tax filing deadline is approaching, and scammers are using the date to their advantage. At least four Hermiston residents received contact from callers reporting to be the Internal Revenue Service on Thursday. Hermiston residents contacted the Hermiston Police Department about receiving IRS scam phone calls at 7:57 a.m., 9:25 a.m., 10:42 a.m., and 12:44 p.m. Each call came from a different phone number with a different area code. Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston cautioned residents that the IRS will mail notifications and these scams often target the elderly. "Do not engage in providing personal informa-

tion with someone you do not know," Edmiston said. "These scammers have even been known to portray themselves as someone they are not." The IRS impersonation scams are very difficult for local law enforcement to investigate. In the past, IRS impersonation scams in Hermiston have been tracked to Canada, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, according to Edmiston. The IRS website reports scams have cost victims more than \$23 million since October 2013. If you receive a scam phone call, do not provide the scammer with any personal information and hang up immediately. Contact the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, or TIGTA, at 800-366-4484 or submit a report at [https://www.treasury.gov/tigta/contact\\_report\\_scam.shtml](https://www.treasury.gov/tigta/contact_report_scam.shtml).

#### Boardman City Council appoints planning commissioner

The city of Boardman has a full seven-member planning commission for the first time in years. On Tuesday, April 5, city councilors appointed Jacob Cain to finish the remainder of a three-year term ending Dec. 31. Cain works as an engineer at the Port of Morrow and has lived in Boardman for about three years. It was the final vacancy left to fill on the commission. Planning commission meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. at Boardman City Hall. The commission is in charge of considering land use and zoning developments presented by city staff, such as potential subdivision projects. Meetings are open to the public.

## Usher named AD; Arstein will coach boys basketball

The Hermiston School Board picked two Sandstone Middle School educators to fill high-profile athletic positions in the school district. Larry Usher, principal at Sandstone and a former boys basketball coach at the high school, was named the district's new athletic director. He will replace Blaine Ganvoa who resigned the position effective June 30. Usher coached the Hermiston boys basketball team from 2002-2010, leading the team to the playoffs in eight of those nine seasons. The athletic director's office is at Hermiston High School and oversees athletics at the high school and both middle schools. The district staff also

approved Casey Arstein, physical education teacher at Sandstone, as the next boys basketball coach at the high school. He is an assistant coach on the team and replaces Dave Ego, who returned from retirement to coach during the 2015-16 season on an interim basis. Other changes include

making Ben DeCarlow assistant tennis coach at Armand Larive Middle School; Jessica Edwards assistant girls golf coach at the high school; Kreig Mueller assistant basketball coach at the high school; Juan Rodriguez as assistant boys golf coach at the high school; and Anthony Voelker as assistant baseball coach at the high school.



Usher



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