

# EOTEC board expands role for Frew Development

Change expected to speed up construction on grounds

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

If Frew Development Group's role in the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center doesn't change, there is no point in renewing its contract in August. That's what the company's CEO told the EOTEC board Friday.

"We don't want to waste your money and time," John Frew said.

Frew appreciated the passion behind the project, he said, but they were "literally a village building a structure" and the endless rounds of meetings with stakeholders over every detail are hindering progress.

"If you pursue perfection and forfeit practicality you're never going to get it done," he said.

The project is expected to be completed in time for the Umatilla County Fair in

August 2017. The current fairgrounds in downtown Hermiston will be turned over to the Hermiston School District on Jan. 1, 2017.

Frew Development Group was hired in 2013 as EOTEC's project manager. For horizontal construction such as underground utilities and for the recently-completed event center building, Frew also was named the construction manager. Those projects, Frew said, were delivered "pretty much on time and pretty much on budget."

For the two major components left — the livestock barns and rodeo arena — Frew Development Group has a more limited role.

The EOTEC board had expected to award a bid for construction of the barns on Friday, but held off after the two submitted bids came in more than \$1 million over the \$2.6 million budget the board had set, signaling a need to scale down plans or make other adjustments to the bid package before re-issuing it.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Visitors to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center both coming and going during an open house earlier this spring in Hermiston.

Designs for the rodeo arena, which board member Dan Dorran said at a June 10 meeting "have been looked at more than any drawings on earth," were supposed to be finished in February but were not put out to bid until this month.

"Those aren't our projects," Frew said. "If they were, I guarantee they would have been built by now."

Board member Ed Brookshier said he agreed it was time for the board

to trust the construction and design details to Frew, with the assistance of a local partner, similar to when Brookshier was Hermiston's city manager and trusted the engineers and contractors hired by the city to do their job instead of asking them to bring every detail back to the city council.

"Our problem here, people, is process, and we have no more time for process," Brookshier said. "I still believe we can get the product

done on time and on budget, but if we keep going as we're going, we're never going to get there, or at least not next year."

Don Miller, who represents the Umatilla County Fair, said if the fair board was not consulted as often moving forward, there were going to be decisions made that they disagreed with. But he also said after months of meetings that Frew Development Group and the EOTEC board have a good understanding of what the fair wants.

"The reality is, no matter what, these barns ... are going to be superior to what we have currently," he said.

Board member Kim Puzey said after seeing Frew Development Group deliver on the site preparation and event center, he was ready to make a motion to have Frew Development Group take "a leading role" in completion of the barns and rodeo arena with the help of a local partner to manage day-to-day questions when Frew was busy with other projects.

The board unanimously voted in favor of Puzey's motion, and Frew said his firm was happy to take on that role and had a local partner in mind.

On Friday the EOTEC board also officially approved the \$9.1 million budget for 2016-2017 as recommended by its budget committee. The budget includes a \$606,075 general fund and an \$8,525,000 construction fund.

Operating revenues include \$45,190 each from Umatilla County and the city of Hermiston, an estimated \$117,730 from the Tourism Promotion Assessment, event center rental revenue of \$40,000 and a beginning cash balance of \$55,300 undesignated and \$297,665 in TPA revenue reserved for marketing purposes.

Operational funds will pay for the salary of business manager Heather Cannell, an administrative assistant, two janitorial staff and .25 FTE of a finance position through the city of Hermiston.

## Landing Days continues, though scaled down

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

Umatilla Landing Days was a little smaller than usual on Saturday, but Umatilla residents in attendance didn't seem to mind.

The annual event, which celebrates Umatilla's history each summer, was originally scaled down to just the fireworks show after a struggle to find enough volunteers, but later the parade, afternoon entertainment, food, games and an evening concert were all added back in. The only major components that ended up missing were the craft vendors and tours of Old Town.

Leah Garza, who attended Landing Days when she was a child and was back again for the first time in years, said the important thing wasn't so much the event, it was the excuse for community members to mingle.

"We don't have too many events every year in Umatilla, so it's good to do something to bring the community together," she said.

Candelario Escovado, a single dad who was taking a break in the shade watching his three children in a bouncy house, said he was just happy for something to keep the kids entertained.

"There's nothing to do but the library and the river, and we heard about this, so here we are," he said.

Nancy and Jeremy Evans, who have lived in Umatilla



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL  
Ethan Tracy prepares to hit a spider into a frog's mouth at Umatilla Landing Days on Saturday.

for about eight years, were enjoying teriyaki chicken kabobs in the shade on Saturday afternoon. They said they used to run a Fourth of July celebration in Idaho, and the event fell apart after they left because no one was willing to step up. So they understand that sometimes events have to be changed when volunteer levels falter.

That's no reason the show shouldn't go on, however, Nancy said.

"I think it's worth having because it gets a lot of people out with their children, and I know it's hard to get people outside," she said.

Jeremy said they enjoyed the small-town celebration after previously attending parades in Las Vegas, where it was sometimes an eight-hour ordeal to travel downtown, find parking, watch the three-hour parade and then fight wall-to-wall traffic getting back home.

"We come (to Landing Days) when we can, just be-

cause we like to be outside and watch the people and the boats," Nancy said.

Jennifer Wylie, Umatilla Chamber of Commerce president, said organizers were thrilled with the weather, which featured cloudless blue skies and temperatures in the eighties.

"It's just a fun event overall, and people love the fireworks," she said.

The afternoon featured entertainers from around the region, including the Round-Up City Cloggers, Umatilla High School cheerleaders and young Hermiston dancers Daytona Tracy and Phillip Mecum.

## OSHA investigating onion shed fire that killed worker

By **ALEXA LOUGEE**  
Staff Writer

The cause of the fatal June 1 onion shed fire near Hermiston is still under investigation.

The fire claimed the life of Columbia Basin Spreaders Inc. employee Joseph Adams, 62, of Umatilla.

According to Columbia Basin Spreaders project manager Steve Williams, the shed was going through a renovation process in an effort to update the air flow system.

Oregon OSHA is investigating the fire. According to Gary Beck, statewide safety enforcement manager, the investigation is still at least two months away from concluding, though legally OSHA has up to six months to finish its investigation and produce its findings. Beck said this is a particularly complicated case to figure out and there are no witnesses.

Adams had worked for the company for more than 10 years, according to his

brother Weslie Adams. His death was one of 27 workplace fatalities reported to Oregon OSHA in 2016 as reported on Oregon OSHA's website.

The fire consumed an approximately 400-by-150-foot single-story onion storage building, one of 18 buildings the company uses to store produce, and caused an estimated \$1.2 million in damage. Columbia Basin plans to rebuild the facility, though a timeline has not been set.

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