

City sells land for Ranch & Home site

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The Hermiston City Council sold a small piece of land to Ranch & Home owner George Dress on Monday night, bringing a planned Hermiston location for the retailer one step closer to reality.

The .43 acres of property is next to a city municipal well and adjacent to the proposed Ranch & Home site on South Highway 395 between Hermiston Foods and the Wal-Mart Distribution Center. City Manager Byron Smith said city staff and engineers “didn’t see a longterm need” for the property, which is outside the fence line around the well.

Smith said the extra space would give the Ranch & Home developers additional space for delivery trucks to

maneuver around the back of the store, improving traffic flow.

Jeff Dress, one of Ranch & Home’s co-owners, testified in favor of the resolution to declare the land surplus and sell it.

“We’ve been massaging the site plan, as Byron knows, quite a bit, and this would help,” he said.

The price of \$6,565 matches the per-acre price that Ranch & Home paid the Port of Umatilla for the adjacent property in 2015. The council approved the resolution unanimously.

The council also approved a name for the free public bus system that will go into effect in Hermiston starting Jan. 3. The system will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday via a contract with Kay-

ak Public Transit.

An online survey by the city saw the HART (Hermiston Area Regional Transit) receive 51 percent of the votes, beating out the Watermelon Express, Bulldog Express and Hermiston Looper. The council unanimously voted to adopt the HART name.

“I heart it,” councilor Doug Primmer said, setting off a round of heart and bus-related puns by council members.

On Monday the council also approved a request from the Hermiston School District to waive utility fees on the Umatilla County Fairgrounds from Dec. 31, 2016 to May 31, 2017.

The district will take over the fairgrounds on Jan. 1, but has agreed to hold off on demolition until the high

school and college rodeos and horse sales are complete for the year. The new rodeo arena at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center will not be finished in time.

Smith said waiving water, sewer and electric bills for five months will cost the city less than \$2,000. Councilors unanimously agreed to do so, noting the school district had been a “very patient” partner and the events would bring in much more than \$2,000 of economic benefit to the community.

“Obviously we want these events to have a home,” Mayor David Drotzmann said. “We don’t want them to find a new home. If they find a new home they won’t come back.”

Contact *Jade McDowell* at 541-564-4536.

IN BRIEF

Holiday season shines in Boardman

A musical Christmas light show, living Nativity, a visit by Santa Claus and carolers are featured in an event at the SAGE Center.

The Boardman Christmas Lighting is tonight (Wednesday, Nov. 30) at 6 p.m. at 101 Olson Road, Boardman. In addition, cookies and hot chocolate will be served. (NOTE: Due to a change in venue, the wrong location is listed in the “Home for the Holidays” calendar, which was inserted in the Nov. 23 edition).

For more information, call 541-481-3014 or visit www.visitsage.com/event/153.

AAUW meeting features wine tasting

An opportunity for wine tasting is available during the AAUW December general meeting.

Everyone is invited to the gathering, which is Thursday at 7 p.m. in Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St., Pendleton. The wine tasting fee is \$10.

AAUW’s (formerly known as the American Association of University Women) mission is to assist in bettering the lives of women and girls. For more information, contact karenallen1965@gmail.com.

com or visit www.aauw.org.

Christmas concert features local talent

Local musician Dalin Puzey, the Hermiston Community Choir and others will kick off the holiday season in song.

The Community Christmas Concert is Friday at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 850 S.W. 11th St., Hermiston. There is no admission charge.

For more information, contact ilene.curtis@alind.com.

Hardman center celebrates renovation

The public is invited to see the newly remodeled dining room at the Hardman Community Center.

A celebration is planned featuring an open house and potluck. The free event is Sunday from 1-4 p.m. at 51186 Highway 207, located about 20 miles south of Heppner. Main dishes are provided by Ruggs Ranch and Snow McElligott; and coffee and punch by the center. Those planning to attend are asked to bring a side, salad or dessert to share. To coordinate seating, large groups should RSVP.

For more information, contact hcc@hughes.net or 541-676-9718.

Enrollment growth fuels district’s need for new local school facilities

District may also seek grant funds as partial bond match

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
Staff Writer

At a meeting Monday at Hermiston High School, Superintendent Fred Maiocco told a small group of residents why the school was considering a \$104 million bond proposal for the May ballot just eight years after voters approved a \$69.9 million bond.

For the district, the proof was in the population.

Since 2008, Hermiston’s student enrollment has grown by 600 students, exceeding even the most aggressive projection in a growth forecast calculated by Portland State University.

Hermiston High School bore the brunt of that growth and is now nearing its 1,600-student capacity.

To boost the high school’s capacity to 2,000 students, the district would use the bond to expand the commons area, add a science and career technical education wing to the north of the building, and make other additions.

Maiocco said the district would probably consider building a second high school once high school enrollment approached 2,400, but that would not likely come under serious consideration for another 15-20 years.

The current bond package also includes new elementary schools at Rocky Heights, Highland Hills and on the dis-

trict’s Theater Lane property, upgrades Maiocco said will replace aging and unsafe facilities in addition to providing more capacity.

Including those new facilities and updates to Sandstone Middle School, the school board thought it was best to pursue a \$104 million bond in May.

Maiocco said the district’s facilities have needs outside the scope of the bond, but the district wanted to keep the tax rate from school bonds under \$5 per \$1,000 in assessed value.

The bond proposal certainly cuts it close, adding 90 cents to the current \$4.09 per \$1,000 tax rate.

The district will also try to offset some of the cost by applying for a grant through the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program, a state initiative that provides matching funds for districts that pass bonds.

Districts in Echo, Umatil-

la, Milton-Freewater and Athena-Weston, have all used it to their advantage, and Maiocco estimates Hermiston could get \$4 million from the grant program if their application is approved.

The deadline for the grant application means the board needs to commit the bond proposal by Dec. 12.

If the bond gets the green light, school board member Ginny Holthus said the board would help form a political action committee to campaign for the bond starting in January.

With the last public opinion survey showing 48 percent of voters opposed to the bond versus 46 for it, Maiocco said the district would see clear, negative effects from not being able to build new facilities while enrollment continues to rise.

The district has added 14 modular classrooms to its schools since 2008. If Herm-

To our valued patients,

It is with a heavy heart to inform you of the passing of *Dr. Ritchie Hibbert*. At this time the office will remain open. Dr. Hibbert always made sure that our patients would be taken care of and we would like to thank you for your continued support as we make this transition.

With the huge support of the dental community our office will continue to see patients with dentists stepping in to cover our current and future appointments during this time as we transition into a new practice.

We, as an office, look forward to still seeing each of you for your dental needs.

Sincerely,
The Hibbert Family
Heather, Sarah, Carley and Jennifer



Good Shepherd Health Care System is proud to introduce Allison Khavkin, M.D., OB/GYN

“I provide women with preventative healthcare services as well as treating both short- and long-term medical conditions. I take a holistic approach to caring for my patients understanding your specific needs—while keeping your quality of life at the forefront of your care.”

Welcoming New Patients

Good Shepherd Women’s Center
541.667.3801

620 NW 11th Street, Suite 103
Hermiston, OR 97838



LOWER YOUR HEATING BILLS THIS WINTER!

Upgrade Your Windows. Add Insulation To Your Attics, Walls And Floors



Cash Incentives Available. Ask Us!

FREE ESTIMATES!

A well-insulated home is a more energy efficient home. It’s also a home that feels cozy in the winter and cooler in the summer. And with cash incentives from Energy Trust of Oregon, you can add insulation and windows to your home and save energy all year long.



Trade Ally of
EnergyTrust
of Oregon

Visit www.energytrust.org

PLY GEM
WINDOWS

MR. INSULATION CO., INC.

541-567-2348 • 541-276-0097 • 1-800-265-2348
30599 Lauback, Hermiston • www.mrinsulation.info

mrinsulation@eotnet.net • CCB#97049 • Member N.E.O.H.B.A.

As an Energy Trust of Oregon trade ally, we can help you access cash incentives to make it easier to improve your home’s energy efficiency.



Stop by our showroom!