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2017 PROMISES GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

New projects in Hermiston will include a senior center, bus system and precision agriculture center

By JADE McDOWELL

Staff Writer

Hermiston has a lot to look forward to in 2017.

Many of the biggest local stories over the last year were forward-looking ones, covering the decisions city and business leaders made to set up major projects that will bear fruit in 2017.

The first development of the new year will be Hermiston's new public bus system, known as the HART (short for Hermiston Area Regional Transit). The bus will start picking people up on Jan. 3, taking them to about 30 different stops around town free of charge from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Other things Hermiston will get in 2017 if all goes according to plan include:

1) A new, mile-long section of trail along Highland Avenue between Riverfront Park and Southwest 11th Street.

2) A new festival street, creating a curb-less, pedestrian-friendly block in front of City Hall that can be blocked off for community events.

3) A redesigned intersection at Northwest 11th Street and Elm Avenue that will include more turn lanes and the addition of traffic signals, plus the addition of a traffic signal down the street at the intersection of 11th Street and Orchard Avenue.

4) A finished fair and rodeo grounds at then Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

5) A new senior center, known as the Harkenrider Center, behind the Hermiston Public Library.



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

Good Shepherd Health Care System President and CEO Dennis Burke speaks at a groundbreaking ceremony for the hospital's newest expansion project in August 2016.

6) A new substation for Hermiston Energy Services that will serve the east side of town and relieve pressure on other substations, which should mean fewer outages and faster times getting customers back online.

7) Good Shepherd Health Care System should finish its \$11 million expansion, which will include a new women's clinic and room to grow.

8) Ranch and Home is getting closer to breaking ground on a Hermiston location on

South Highway 395.

9) The community could choose to pass a \$104 million school bond in the spring, setting Hermiston School District on an immediate path to an expanded high school, two replacement elementary school buildings and one entirely new elementary school.

10) The Oregon Legislature plans to pass a massive transportation package during its

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Biggest stories of 2016

Hermiston Herald

Editor's note: The following is a list of 2016's top stories of the years as picked by the Hermiston staff of the Hermiston Herald and East Oregonian.

The murder-suicide

It was a horrible crime that claimed three lives and left another person wounded. It shook the school district, the sports community and the community as a whole. But out of the unexplainable violence, members of the community rose to support each other, the victims' families and show its heart and faith. On Aug. 18, 2016, Jason Huston, 45, killed James "JJ" Hurtado at a remote loca-

tion near the Umatilla River outside of Hermiston, then drove into town, going to the home a friend, Ken Valdez, also 45. Huston kicked in the door and went into the bedroom where he shot and killed Valdez and wounded Andria Bye, who was Hurtado's mother. Huston then called his mother and then called 9-1-1 to report a shooting before killing himself.

EOTEC building opening

Construction was completed on the first building on the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center campus in the spring and the event center building started hosting events. Construction is

now underway on the arena, which will be the future home of the Farm-City Pro Rodeo. The EOTEC site will also be the home of the Umatilla County Fair, with the first fair and rodeo expected to be held on the ground in August 2017.

New hotel

Construction on a new 93-room Holiday Inn Express began at West Hermiston Avenue and Highway 395 in Hermiston in December 2015. Just less than one year later, the new motel was built and open for business in time for the Christmas holiday season.

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Top online stories for 2016

The following is a list of the headlines of stories that appeared on the Hermiston Herald website in 2016.

These were the 11 most read stories online.

For online readers, police, crime and other types of public safety stories drew the most attention online.

Of the top 11 most read stories, only two did not fall in to public safety category. One was the resignation of a school official and the other was an obituary for a former Main Street business owner, Jacque Mack Hill, the former owner of IJ Gems.

1. Two dead, one injured in Hermiston shooting; teen missing
2. Breckheimer gets eight years for fatal DUI
3. Pursuit ends in crash near Hermiston High School
4. HHS athletic director submits resignation
5. Two men hurt in early morning shooting in Hermiston
6. Sheriff's office investigating assault
7. Man dies in Stanfield house fire
8. Fire forces evacuation of Columbia Court Club, closed one lane of Highway 395
9. Single vehicle rollover north of Hermiston
10. Man arrested in Umatilla after shooting in Hermiston
11. Jacqueline 'Jacque' Mack Hill (obituary)

Hermiston police to add arson detective in 2016

Department adding a couple of new specialties for officers' roles

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN

Staff Writer

The Hermiston Police Department will add an arson detective and a new school resource officer as part of a restructuring plan in 2017.

The changes will stem from new needs within the department, as well as the retiring of a long-time employee.

Capt. Darryl Johnson, with the department since 1997, will retire June 2, creating an opening in the department.

"Ultimately, we'll need to back-

fill that position," said Police Chief Jason Edmiston. "I think it's a good sign if an agency is healthy enough to fill a position from within. In early January, I'll be naming the new captain and it will more than likely come from the current sergeant corps."

Once that happens, Edmiston said he will also need to fill a sergeant position.

The changes will also include several new positions within the department, including a detective lieutenant specializing in arsons, an additional school resource officer and a training officer/evidence technician.

The detective lieutenant will be a partnership with the fire department, Edmiston said.

"The fire department will pay the city \$12,000 a year for that

position," he said. "The detective lieutenant will take an existing detective slot and turn it into a supervisor position in partnership with the fire department," he said.

Detective Randy Studebaker will take on the role in July, but before he does he will attend a national fire academy course for two weeks to learn about arson investigation.

"Any suspicious fire — Randy will have the proper knowledge to investigate," Edmiston said. "Currently there are only five or six arson investigators in Oregon and they're all Oregon State Police. ... By making it a lieutenant, we can avoid overtime, and can throw that person into on-call rotation."

Edmiston said the new position

would save the department some money and also create a good partnership with the fire department. He said he hopes that as Studebaker learns more about suspicious fires, he will be able to assist other arson investigators around Eastern Oregon.

In addition to Studebaker, the department has two general detectives and one detective assigned to the drug task force.

The other structural change, Edmiston said, is to add a second school resource officer. Several duties were moved around and reassigned so that one officer could become a full-time school resource officer. Edmiston said there has been a desire and need for several years to increase the presence of of-

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HERMISTON HISTORY

SANTA HARKENRIDER DELIVERS LAND TO THE NATIONAL GUARD, 25 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH.

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REBUILD DELAYED

COLUMBIA COURT CLUB RECONSTRUCTION DELAYED BY INSURANCE DISPUTE.

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GOT AN OLD DRUG

UMATILLA DRUG STORE ADDS DROP BOX FOR UNUSED MEDICATION.

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MIND THE WEATHER

SLICK ROADS CONTRIBUTE TO MULTIPLE CRASHES IN THE AREA.

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BRIEFLY

Photography is a snap with digital camera class

For those who got a new digital camera for Christmas or want to learn more about features on your camera, a class is being offered by Hermiston Parks & Recreation.

Adult Digital Camera for Beginners provides information about features of digital cameras beyond the auto-select button. Participants need to bring their camera to the classes.

Open to ages 16 and up, the three-session class begins Monday, Jan. 23, from 5-7 p.m. at 60 Minute Photo, 1000 N. First St., Hermiston. It runs weekly though Feb. 6. The cost is \$40 for Hermiston residents of \$50 for non-residents.

Because space is limited, people are encouraged to register early — the deadline is Thursday, Jan. 19. For more information, visit www.hermistonrecreation.com. To register, call 541-667-5018 or stop by the recreation office, 180 N.E. Second St., Hermiston.



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