

2017:
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2017 session, which will likely direct significant money toward road projects on Hermiston's wish list.

12) The Umatilla Chemical Depot is slated to finally return to local control in 2017, allowing the Columbia Development Authority to start selling or leasing land to companies interested

in building new projects there.

13) Construction of the Precision Irrigated Agriculture Center — part of Blue Mountain Community College's bond package — is expected to wrap up in early 2017.

14) Lifeways plans to open its new 16-bed psychiatric care facility in the spring of 2017 on Linda Avenue.

Contact Jade McDowell at 541-564-4536.



CONTRIBUTED BY THE CITY OF HERMISTON

Ground was broken on the rodeo grounds at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in the fall of 2016.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The move to EOTEC has provided the Hermiston Farm Fair with the opportunity to expand and add more vendors. The center and its grounds will host the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo for the first time in 2017.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Tami Rebman, who sits on the Hermiston planning commission, places a red dot on an image of Redmond that she likes during a rollout party for the festival street concept in October. Participants were asked to show what kind they liked by placing red dots on photos of other towns that have also created a festival street.

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Bus System

The city of Hermiston has approved a contract with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to start a new public bus service in January, with the first bus scheduled to run on Tuesday, Jan. 3. Under the contract, Kayak Public Transit will provide a fixed-route bus service free to any member of the public for at least 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. The route will loop through Hermiston once each hour, stopping in residential neighborhoods as well as grocery stores, medical clinics and government buildings. The bus will also provide doorstop service for qualifying disabled residents who cannot reach a bus stop on their own but live within three-fourths of a mile of a stop.

Water tower painted

The south water tow-

er along Highway 395 was given a fresh coat of paint and a new look, as contractors painted the new logo for the city of Hermiston with the "Where Life is Sweet" slogan in October. The repainting brings the iconic watermelon back to the high-visibility location and covers over the previous city slogan and mismatched paint job — both of which have been the source of snickers and complaints. When the old logo of "Hermiston: You Can GROW Here" was painted on the tank in 2014, only the portion of the reservoir featuring the new slogan was repainted and the fresh paint didn't match the faded paint surrounding it. Many residents also complained that there was no watermelon featured on that side of the tank, either.

New fire district

Voters approved the formation of Umatilla County Fire District 1, which in

essence merged the Hermiston and Stanfield fire departments into the newly formed district.

Good Shepherd medical complex expansion

Good Shepherd Health Care System is in the midst of an \$11 million expansion, which will include a new women's clinic and room to grow.

Depot transfer postponed

The Umatilla Chemical Depot is slated to finally return to local control in 2017, allowing the Columbia Development Authority to start selling or leasing land to companies interested in building new projects there.

School district pursuing bond

Voters will get an op-

portunity to vote on a proposed \$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.

Other stories of note: RoeMarks remodel

The former RoeMarks Men's and Western Wear building on the corner of Main and Northeast Second streets sat empty for nearly four years before Simmons Insur-

ance Group purchased it in May. After hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of renovations on the two-story brick building, Simmons Insurance Group held a ribbon-cutting on their new headquarters in November. Simmons Insurance Group was founded in Hermiston in 1974 and has since grown to about 100 employees in 20 locations. Hermiston is still the company's headquarters, however, and almost half of the employees are there. Neighbors said the move to the bigger space for administrative offices

will allow for continued growth.

BMCC's precision irrigation center

Construction of the Precision Irrigated Agriculture Center — part of Blue Mountain Community College's bond package — is ongoing and expected to wrap up in early 2017.

Umatilla, Echo school bonds pass

Voters in Echo and Umatilla approved new school bonds that will allow updates to schools in both districts.

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icers in the schools. Since 2009, he said, there has only been one officer assigned to the entire district.

The restructuring also led to another revised role — a training officer and evidence technician who will be trained on assessing evidence out in the field.

Edmiston also discussed the year-end crime report for 2016, which will be released in January. He said that overall, things have been fairly calm, but he anticipates there will be a couple of notable increases — in the categories of aggravated assault and rape. But he added that because the rate of those incidents in Hermiston are typically low, one or two additional incidents can skew data.

"Hermiston typically has a low person crime rate and high property crime rate," he said. "When you're dealing with 5 incidents (for rape) compared to 20 (for aggravated assault), a swing of one can increase the percentage."

He said that while those types of personal crimes will likely show an increase in the 2016 report compared to 2015, he expects that over a longer period, the rate is about the same.

"I think as compared to the 10-year average, we will probably be in the normal range," he said.

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