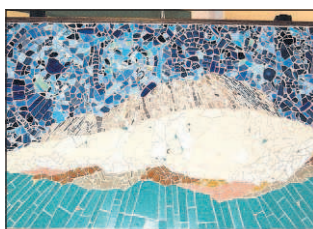


EOTEC still working on fair, rodeo contracts

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
Staff Writer

Less than six months remain until the start of the 2017 Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Rodeo and construction is progressing at their new home, but some operational details have yet to be worked out.



EO FILE PHOTO

A three-year mosaic project created by Highland Hills fifth grade students was donated to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center on Friday.

At the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center board meeting Friday, Farm-City board member Mike Kay raised a concern that a contract between EOTEC and the rodeo has not yet been finalized.

“From a history standpoint, we’ve been waiting for a year for this,” Kay said, recalling repeated attempts to solidify a contract. “We’re now five months away from the rodeo, and we still don’t have any type of a working agreement.”

He added that the agreement for the rodeo-specific mercantile building had already been completed and a year-long lease had been signed.

“We have a piece of property that we have to start developing that’ll be at financial cost to the rodeo,” he said. “It doesn’t do us any good to continue to work on the mercantile piece if we don’t have a working agreement on the piece of property.”

Byron Smith, who is both EOTEC board chair and Hermiston city manager, said the contract has been delayed so the fair and rodeo contracts can be brought before the board at the same time, but told Kay and the Farm-City board to trust in the “good faith” agreements between the entities.

“It’s been a little slower putting together the contract for the fair than for the rodeo,” Smith said. “We’re starting to work with them, and have gone through a first draft.” He said many people want to be able to comment on the agreement before it is finalized, but that should happen in March.

The EOTEC board includes representatives of the fair, rodeo, city and county.

The board received some construction updates at the meeting as well. Smith reported Hendon Construction is continuing to pour concrete walls for the arena despite the cold weather, and construction has also begun on ticket booths and sound

racks. Gravel was scheduled to be brought in this week, and Smith said the city is also paying for the drilling of a second irrigation well.

The board also discussed how to handle sponsorship of the fair and rodeo this year. Smith noted that in the past EOTEC has sponsored both entities, but this year may be a little different, as both events will now be on EOTEC property.

Both groups said they would still like EOTEC’s sponsorship, and will go through the application process.

Smith said EOTEC paid about \$5,000 in sponsorships for each group last year, and anticipates EOTEC’s contribution will be similar this year.

Also at the meeting: • Hermiston teacher Pat Temple and Rotary president Dean Fialka presented a mosaic artwork donation, which depicts the Hermiston Butte and was created by students over the past three years. The artwork will hang in the EOTEC building for the public to enjoy.

• The board announced a neighborhood meeting at 5:30 p.m. on March 7 where fair and rodeo representatives will discuss logistics for the events including parking, traffic and noise issues.

• The board discussed the proposed organizational structure for EOTEC. At the top of the chart is the Hermiston City Council and Umatilla County Commissioners, followed by the EOTEC board. The board oversees the manager, who in turn is in charge of an administrative assistant and operations/maintenance manager. The board hopes to finalize this structure at its next meeting, March 10, at 7 a.m.

Contact Jayati Ramakrishnan at 541-564-4534 or jramakrishnan@hermistonherald.com



STAFF PHOTO BY JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN

Irrigon residents show their love for their hometown during the “Irrigon Proud” noise parade, tossing candy to spectators from their homemade float.

City of Irrigon celebrates 60 years

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
Staff Writer

A pack of ambulances and sheriff’s cruisers drove down the streets of Irrigon Saturday afternoon as part of the city’s 60th birthday, kicking off the “Irrigon Proud” celebration with a noise parade.

The vehicles, along with some citizens who decorated their cars or rode on bikes alongside, ended up at City Hall. More than 50 people gathered to hear the winners of the Irrigon poster and essay contests announced, and later looked at city memorabilia and gathered for a bonfire at the Irrigon Marina.

Though cityhood has only been official since 1957, it has been called “Irrigon” since 1902 — combining the words “irrigation” and “Oregon.” Citizens listened to historical anecdotes and memories from several of the city’s long-term residents.

Mick Tolar, the principal of A.C. Houghton Elementary School for 30 years, read some notes on the history of education in Morrow County. The old school building was destroyed by a fire in the 1920s, and the Irrigon school district became a part of Morrow County School District in 1959.

“When I joined in 1960, A.C. Houghton had an enrollment of about 150 students,” he said.

Janet Park, who grew up in Irrigon, recalled some of the changes to the town from the one she knew



STAFF PHOTO BY JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN

Mick Tolar, the longtime principal of Irrigon’s A.C. Houghton Elementary, recalls some of the history of the town during the Irrigon Proud celebration Saturday.

growing up. She grew up in a house near the town’s fire station.

“We didn’t have electricity in that house until 1947,” she said. She remembers the day they got running water and a phone in the house, and some of the things they did for fun — exploring meadows and areas by the river, and sliding down the fire escape using the waxed paper used to cover bread.

“We didn’t have plastic then,” she said.

Park said a highlight she recalls is meeting Pres-

ident Harry Truman, who came through Umatilla County on his whistle-stop tour in 1948.

“Irrigon was a good place to grow up,” she said. “It was pretty simple.”

Marilyn Stewart, a former teacher at A.C. Houghton who still lives in Irrigon, moved there in 1950 when her husband got a job at the Umatilla Army Depot. She remembered all the stores and buildings that were in Irrigon when she moved there — and how many more there are now.

“How far have we come?” she asked. “Stoplights, sewer system, the marina, new buildings, a gas station.”

“It’s been a very interesting journey,” she said. “There’ve been some ups and downs, like with any town. But if all the people of Irrigon work together, I’m sure it can be not only a great city, but one you can all be proud to call home.”

Contact Jayati Ramakrishnan at 541-564-4534 or jramakrishnan@hermistonherald.com

City council discusses replacing EOTEC board

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Frustration with progress on the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center has the Hermiston City Council discussing a takeover of the project.

Councilor John Kirwan proposed during Monday’s meeting that the council ask the Umatilla County Commission — the project’s other partner — for permission to become EOTEC’s acting board until after construction is complete and the 2017 fair and rodeo are over. The rest of the council was less sure of the idea but agreed that they should discuss it in a special meeting with the county commissioners as soon as possible.

Kirwan pointed out that it had been more than a month since the county and city had asked the EOTEC board to come back with an operations plan for who will run the center. The

EOTEC board discussed a plan on Friday but did not approve it.

“There’s a lot of over-discussion and over-planning and not a lot of action,” he said, calling EOTEC “literally and figuratively bogged down in the mud.”

City Manager Byron Smith, who also serves as the EOTEC board chair, has estimated he spends 20 to 25 percent of his time on EOTEC. Kirwan said Smith’s time, along with “untold hours” from other staff members, donation of the 90 acres the project sits on and other in-kind donations means the city is “already doing the heavy lifting.” He proposed the council also approve contracts, bids and other EOTEC business during a once-a-month special session before their regular meetings.

Mayor Dave Drotzmann was skeptical.

“So we’re going to accomplish more than they’re accomplishing, in one hour?” he asked.

“I believe so,” Kirwan replied.

Drotzmann, who was on a committee that raised \$2 million for the event center, said he shared Kirwan’s frustrations that EOTEC was not finished earlier and there was still not an operations plan in place. But he said he didn’t think “coming late to the party” would make things move any faster, considering the depth of experience with the project — and the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo — that current EOTEC board members have.

City attorney Gary Luisi said there would have to be a rewrite of the intergovernmental agreement with Umatilla County that the county would have to approve. Luisi also commented that it would be “diffi-

cult” because partners like the fair, rodeo and hoteliers who are used to having a seat on the board would want to see their interests protected.

Councilor Doug Smith said he was concerned about how the move would be perceived, while Doug Primmer said he worried about delays while paperwork was adjusted and everything was legally transferred to the council.

“I think it would bring a lot of that stuff to a grinding halt,” he said.

Rod Hardin said he thought that whatever happened, there needed to be more conversation with the county.

“The two of us are a team,” he said.

“The other half of the team needs to show up,” councilor Jackie Myers replied.

Kirwan agreed with Myers that it didn’t feel like the

county was placing enough importance on EOTEC, and the city needed to push them to step up.

When asked what he thought about the proposal, city manager Smith replied that EOTEC is a “complicated thing.”

“I would be a little leery of the concept,” he said.

At councilors request, however, he said he would set up a meeting with the county to discuss it. He also said he would try to push the EOTEC board to move faster on decisions

such as the lease with the Farm-City Pro Rodeo, which rodeo board member Mike Kay said during Friday’s EOTEC meeting was still not completed after a year of waiting for it to be done.

Smith said he did still believe that the project will be able to host the 2017 fair and rodeo. Contractors broke ground on the barns last week.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

When they say “You need a hearing test!” and you say “I have a hairy chest?”

SOUND ADVANTAGE HEARING CENTER

Photo, Left to right:
Verna Taylor, HAS
Ric Jones, BC-HIS
Forrest Cahill, HAS

541-567-4063 • 405 N. 1st St., Suite #107, Hermiston
541-215-1888 • 246 SW Dorion, Pendleton

Need Outdoor Living Space? We’ve Got YOU Covered!

Backyard By Design, LLC

FREE estimates!
541-720-0772

Visit our Showroom:
102 E Columbia Dr
Kennewick, WA 99336
(call for current hours)

Patio Covers
Pergolas • Sunrooms
Retractable Awnings
Screen Rooms
Handrail • Sun/Solar
Shades & More!

www.mybackyardbydesign.com

Live In Concert – Direct From Nashville!

Blackwood Legacy Quartet

www.BlackwoodLegacy.com or visit us on Facebook

WED—MAR 8—7 PM
First Christian Church
215 N Main St—Pendleton
Info: 541-276-5358 www.fccpendleton.org

THU—MAR 9—7 PM
Anchor Point Seventh-day Adventist Church
77 West Highland Ave—Hermiston
Info: 541-289-3022

Admission is free – An offering will be received.