

Herald Business

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BRIEF CASE

Latino Business Network hosts resource fair

An informational forum to connect people to employers and services in our region is planned in Hermiston.

The Latino Business Network is hosting the Community Agricultural Workers and Employers Resource Fair. The free event is Wednesday, March 8, from 5-7:30 p.m. at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395. A free dinner will be served by Fiesta Foods.

Vendor applications are available at the conference center or www.hermistonchamber.com. For more information, call the chamber at 541-567-6151.

Workforce board offers help

Money is available to manufacturing and health care companies in Eastern Oregon to assist with retraining current employees.

The Eastern Oregon Workforce Board has dedicated \$40,000 through the Incumbent Worker Training Program. This could include training in new or advanced skills that enable an employee to multi-task or be more

productive.

The program is limited to businesses in the manufacturing or health care sectors. Priority is given to applicants who demonstrate that funding could assist them in avoiding a layoff, downsizing or closure, or would provide retention opportunities by upgrading employee skills as a result of the training.

For more information, call Tara Bishop at 541-278-5688. For more about the Eastern Oregon Workforce Board, visit www.eowb.org.

Nominations open for assistant award

The Hermiston Chamber of Commerce is seeking nominations for the administrative professional of the year.

People are encouraged to nominate their administrative assistant to be recognized during a special Administrative Professionals Day Luncheon. The event is Tuesday, April 25 at 11:45 a.m. at the Hermiston Conference Center. Tickets are \$20 each or a table of eight for \$140. In addition to all nominees

Nominations are due by Friday, April 14. For more information, contact 541-567-6151, info@hermistonchamber.com.

City supports transportation package, crime lab

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The Hermiston City Council voiced its support for a state transportation funding package Monday with an official resolution urging the legislature to pass one.

The council also threw its support behind funding to keep the Oregon State Police crime lab in Pendleton open and funding detectives on the Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team.

Mayor Dave Drotzmann said the Legislature has been promising a transportation package for a couple of years now, so it would be great to finally see it happen.

The full list of major road projects the city would like to tackle carries a bill of about \$43 million. The city's annual budget for street projects is about \$300,000 a year.

"We need some help," Drotzmann said.

One of the first projects the city would like to take on is a \$7 million overhaul of North First Place between Highland Avenue and Elm Avenue. Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the project

would include widening the road, putting in sidewalks, adding turn lanes and installing traffic signals where First Place intersects with Highland Avenue and Orchard Avenue.

When school gets out for the day or for lunch both intersections are highly congested, sometimes to the point that they block emergency vehicles trying to leave the fire station.

The city would also like to extend Gettman Road on the southern side of town so that it connects to Highway 395. The road currently ends at First Place, but extending it would create another path to Highway 395 for residents on the south side of town, relieving congestion on Highland Avenue.

"As we continue to grow to the south we need to look at how to provide additional connection from Highway 207 to Highway 395," Morgan said.

The project would cost \$2.5 million, Morgan said, not including the cost to pave the portion of Gettman that already exists.

A third major project

the city would like to accomplish using transportation package dollars would be realignment of Harper Road, Geer Road and First Place where they create a confusing three-way stop stretching across the railroad tracks. The project would cost \$1.5 million.

"It's a mess," Morgan said of the intersection, but obviously it's a challenge due to the alignment of the railroad and the roadway."

Other projects on the city's to-do list include widening 10th Street near Sandstone Middle School and Highland Hills Elementary School for \$8 million, building a bridge to connect Punkin Center to Interstate 82 for \$15 million, improving Second Street's connection to Highway 395 near the Hermiston Conference Center for \$2 million and developing a new road in the city's industrial area for \$3 million.

Those projects won't happen without state or federal funding.

Without state funding the area will also lose three drug detectives on the BENT task force and

the entire forensics lab in Pendleton.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said that if the crime lab in Pendleton closes, forcing law enforcement in Eastern Oregon to use the one in Portland, it will take longer for evidence to travel back and forth from the lab, longer for that evidence to be processed, longer for analysts to come out to testify at trials and longer for them to drive out to Eastern Oregon and collect evidence from major crime scenes.

"A lot of people already believe justice is slow," he said. "Stand by if the forensics lab closes, because it will get even slower."

Drotzmann said Governor Kate Brown's proposal to close the lab was an example of her acting against Eastern Oregon. He said if the state takes such a valuable resource away it will "speak poorly" to lawmakers' treatment of Oregonians on the eastern side of the state.

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

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