

EOTEC approves leases and operations plan

Contractors have made up for lost time on construction of EOTEC, which they report is on schedule

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center board approved an operations plan and leases for the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo at its Friday meeting.

The operations plan, which will be vetted by the Hermiston City Council and Umatilla County Board of Commissioners during a joint meeting March 20, calls for the hiring of a general manager for EOTEC who would hire and supervise staff, oversee day-to-day operations, market the center and perform other managerial duties.

The manager would oversee an administrative assistant and custodial staff, and would report to the EOTEC board, which would in turn report to the Hermiston City Council and Umatilla County Board of Commissioners.

Larry Givens, who represents the county commission on the board, acknowledged questions

that had been brought up recently by city councilor John Kirwan and commissioner George Murdock about whether the city of Hermiston should manage EOTEC more directly and whether the county should continue to be a partner. He said people “jumped the gun” on that conversation, but said sometime down the road there could end up being changes.

“This is a good start,” he said.

The project’s two anchor tenants will be the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo, and on Friday the board approved leases for both. The fair will pay \$10,000 a year to lease the fairgrounds for six weeks each summer, including the three weeks before the fair and two weeks after. The lease agreement also includes storage space, an office in the event center and access to the board room for fair board meetings.

The rodeo’s lease of the arena also runs at \$10,000 per year, which covers a 90-day period. Included in that lease is naming the arena the Farm-City Pro Rodeo Arena, leaving open the possibility that with the rodeo board’s consent EOTEC could add a corporate sponsor’s name.

The fair and rodeo will pay for their own utilities

and will be responsible for custodial work and repairs caused by their events.

During Friday’s meeting the board got good news on the construction side as John Eckhardt of Knerr Construction reported that the company had found some “value engineering” opportunities to save money on construction, and with that in mind had made the call to use overtime work to make up for the lost time caused by snow storms in December and January.

“We have done that, and we are on schedule,” he said.

Carl Hendon of Hendon Construction also reported that the rodeo arena was still on track to be completed by mid-June.

The project’s overall manager is Frew Construction Group, which has been subcontracting with Knerr Construction in recent months as its on-site partner. In an effort to continue momentum on construction, the board approved new agreements on Friday transferring the Knerr subcontract directly to EOTEC and reducing payments to Frew Development Group by \$6,000 per month.

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

Commissioner says Hermiston should own, control EOTEC

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
EO Media Group

Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock said March 8 that the county should consider handing full ownership of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center to the city of Hermiston.

“I believe that in the long run we need to be a tenant of EOTEC and neither an owner or a manager,” he said during the board of commissioners meeting in Pendleton.

The county and city of Hermiston currently share ownership of the event center. Murdock said the two local governments are already working on an operating agreement dealing with the future of EOTEC and his ownership proposal should be part of the discussion.

The city and county next meet March 20 to discuss EOTEC management.

The county’s primary interest in the event center continues to be as the new home for the annual fair, Murdock said, while Hermiston has broader interests of tourism and benefit to the business community. Under his proposition, the county would use the facility for the fair and pay a lease of \$25,000 a year for five years, then renegotiate the deal. He also suggested the county could have a permanent storage area at the site and office space.

He said the county was at a crossroads with EOTEC, which “stands to be a wonderful addition to Umatilla County,” while also being a potential liability. The county and Hermiston are each

on the hook for three years to cover shortfalls in EOTEC’s operational expenses.

He emphasized the break from EOTEC is a long-term goal and a notion he considered long before Hermiston city councilor John Kirwan suggested earlier this month that the council take over as EOTEC’s acting board until after the end of construction and the 2017 fair and rodeo.

“This is a position I’ve held for some time relative to the ultimate future of EOTEC,” Murdock told fellow commissioners Larry Givens and Bill Elfering. “It’s a position I have shared openly ... it’s a matter of record... it’s simply making clear that’s ultimately where we need to move.”

Givens and Elfering responded with caution.

“Turbulence comes up in a marriage from time to time,” Elfering said. “And I’m not ready to divorce yet from the proposal we’ve had.”

Elfering said Hermiston taking over the event center makes about as much sense as the county taking it over and that the parties need to hold more discussions.

Givens said EOTEC is about to move from a construction phase into operations. Finding the best management style is the crux of the issue, according to Givens.

“I agree,” Murdock said. “But I don’t know of any successful business that would give their checkbook to someone else.”

Don Miller serves on the EOTEC and the fair boards and urged the county to stay on as a co-owner. Pulling out at this juncture is premature, he said, and could harm economic opportunities.

Murdock said his proposal was just a matter of discussion and not for action. He also said he supported the EOTEC board and would not agree with Hermiston City Council taking over the project.

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15
MORROW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, 9 a.m.
SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman (541-676-9061).

UMATILLA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, 9 a.m. Umatilla County Courthouse room 130, 216 S.E. Fourth St., Pendleton (Doug Olsen 541-278-6208).

AG PAD/UAS SAFETY MEETING FOR STAKEHOLDERS, 10 a.m. Eastern Oregon Regional Airport terminal/old TSA room, 2016 Airport Road, Pendleton (Erica Stewart 541-276-7754).

INTERMOUNTAIN EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT, 5 p.m. IMESD office, 2001 S.W. Nye Ave., Pendleton (888-437-6892).

BOARDMAN PLANNING COMMISSION, 7 p.m. Boardman City Hall, 200 City Center Circle, Boardman (541-481-9252).

PILOT ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT, 7 p.m. Pilot Rock High School library, 101 N.E. Cherry St., Pilot Rock (541-443-8291).

UMATILLA HOSPITAL DISTRICT, 7:30 p.m. Umatilla Medical Clinic, 1890 Seventh St., Umatilla (541-922-3104).

THURSDAY, MARCH 16
ECHO CITY COUNCIL, 4 p.m. Echo City Hall, 20 S. Bonanza St., Echo (541-376-8411).

HERMISTON IRRIGATION DISTRICT, 4 p.m. Hermiston Irrigation District office conference room, 366 E. Hurlburt Ave., Hermiston (541-567-3024).

UMATILLA COUNTY SPECIAL LIBRARY DISTRICT, 5:15 p.m. Budget committee meeting will be followed by the regular meeting. Pendleton City Hall second floor jury room, 501 S.W. Emigrant Ave., Pendleton (Dan Feil 541-276-6449).

PENDLETON PLANNING COMMISSION, 7 p.m. Pendleton City Hall council chambers, 501 S.W. Emigrant Ave., Pendleton (541-966-0201).

MONDAY, MARCH 20
UMATILLA-MORROW COUNTY HEAD START, 11:30 a.m. Head Start office, 110 N.E. Fourth St., Hermiston (Kerry Tassie 541-564-6878).

LOWER UMATILLA BASIN GROUND WATER MANAGEMENT AREA COMMITTEE, 1-3 p.m. Stafford Hansell Government Center, 915 S.E. Columbia Drive, Hermiston

(Janet Greenup 541-676-5452 ext. 109).

MORROW COUNTY PARKS COMMITTEE, 1 p.m. Columbia Basin Electric Co-Op conference room, 171 W. Linden Way, Heppner (Kirsti Cason 541-989-9500).

NIXYAAWII COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD, 4:30 p.m. Nixyaawii Community School, 73300 July Grounds Lane, Mission (541-966-2680).

ECHO SCHOOL DISTRICT, 6 p.m. Echo Community School, 600 Gerone St., Echo (541-376-8436).

HERMISTON CITY COUNCIL/UMATILLA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS JOINT MEETING, 6 p.m. Joint work session begins at 6 p.m. regarding EOTEC, followed by the regular council meeting at 7 p.m. EOTEC main building, 1705 E. Airport Road, Hermiston (541-567-5521).

HELIIX CITY COUNCIL, 7 p.m. Helix City Hall, 119 Columbia St., Helix (541-457-2521).

PENDLETON YOUTH COMMISSION, 7 p.m. Intermountain ESD office, 2001 S.W. Nye Ave., Pendleton (541-276-6711).

Hermiston City council rescheduled to March 20 at EOTEC

HERMISTON — The Hermiston City Council meeting and work session scheduled for March 13 has been moved to March 20.

The meeting will take place at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, 1705 E. Airport Road outside Hermiston, starting with a joint work session at 6 p.m. between the council and the Umatilla County Commission regarding EOTEC.

The council’s regular session will begin at 7 p.m.

SAFETY:

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\$900 for a dog over the internet, but the people have not given him the dog and are asking for more money.
9:38 p.m. — Caller at Northwest 12th Street, Hermiston, reported shots fired, possibly a rifle, east of their residence.
10:00 p.m. — Possible robbery

reported at Circle K on North First Street, Hermiston.

THURSDAY, MARCH 9
11:05 a.m. — A customer was out of control at Club 24, South Highway 395, Hermiston.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8
11:49 a.m. — A case worker at Southwest Joshua Court, Hermiston,

reported allegations of physical abuse on a child. The child was across from the high school at Head Start.

4:03 p.m. — A caller at East Main Street, Hermiston, said one of her young dancers saw someone with a gun in their hand.

5:23 p.m. — There was a report of a suicidal subject at North McNary Street and East Cherry Avenue, Hermiston.


6:54 p.m. — A man at Club 24 on

South Highway 395 keeps looking into cars and begging people for money as they walk out the door.

TUESDAY, MARCH 7
3:20 a.m. — A 19 year-old male on West Hartley Avenue, Hermiston, was destroying things.

8:05 a.m. — There was a report of a suicidal subject on South Highway 395, Hermiston.


STUDENT OF THE WEEK



Austin Tate
Nixyaawii Community School

The staff at Nixyaawii Community School is pleased to announce their Student of the Week, Austin Tate. Austin, a junior, joined us this winter and has fit in well with both staff and students. He is a pleasure to have in class and adds great perspective to class discussions. He is extremely respectful to everyone and is currently maintaining an “A” in all his classes.

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