

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Potential projects reduce bite of bond

We have a choice in a little over a month to support a bond measure that will give our community one of the most up-to-date school facilities in Oregon, while eliminating most of the overcrowding in our schools.

One of the items that has not been discussed is the increased tax base that is coming to our property tax district. Currently, there is over \$1 billion of new projects slated for West Umatilla County. This potential increased assessed value will actually lower our taxes when it comes on line within the next 10 years. This growth in assessed valuation, with the current low interest rates, makes this the perfect time to increase our schools capacity. The cost of the improvements will never be lower than now.

The community is growing and we need to be prepared to educate the children of our area. So please understand that we may have a short term tax increase, but the future continues to look bright for our community and its property tax situation because of these projects. We urge you to support the bond measure.

DENNIS AND CATHERINE BARNETT
HERMISTON

School conditions hamper learning

Education is one of the most powerful investments you can make and I am urging you to make that investment here in Hermiston. Research shows that education paves the way for better health and employment, benefiting individuals and communities.

Once of my largest concerns is that some of our local school facilities are not the most conducive to learning. Imagine trying to work in an office that is by turns blazing hot or freezing cold. I know from experience that adults will not tolerate this in the office environment, yet we expect our children to stay on task and learn in these conditions. I have had the opportunity to be in overheated classrooms at Rocky Heights on several occasions. Due to the outdated system at Rocky, there is no way to control for this. Each time I was relieved to leave after a short stay; the students and teachers are not so lucky. Let's talk a little more about the Rocky Heights facility. I have observed garbage

cans placed at strategic locations in various classrooms to catch water dripping from the ceiling. The "quads" at Rocky feature partial walls and are configured in a way that makes it necessary for students, staff and visitors to traipse through one classroom to get to another. Most of the other classrooms at Rocky have outside entrances such that visitors, while they are requested to do so, do not have to actually pass through a main area before accessing classrooms. This compromises student safety as does the fact that students are left exposed as they travel from their classrooms to the cafeteria/gym, library or office. Classroom doors remain locked during the day, and students and visitors must knock to enter. This is meant to increase safety, but the reality is that for most of the classrooms, it is hard to see who is knocking until you open the door.

Because the cafeteria and gym are one and the same at Rocky Heights, indoor physical activity opportunities are limited when recess is canceled due to inclement weather. The large student population also necessitates that one PE class per day take place in a small, carpeted classroom. The importance of physical activity in the school setting should not be overlooked. Evidence shows that physical activity facilitates academic performance through enhanced student concentration and improved classroom behavior.

Today's students are our community leaders and decision makers of the future. I am willing to make an investment in our schools so that students have the opportunity to learn in environments that support them in reaching their full academic potential while keeping them healthy and safe. Please join me in voting "YES" for our students on May 16th.

ANGIE TREADWELL
HERMISTON

Schools too costly to repair

During my tenure on the Hermiston School District Board of Education from 2011 to 2015, we were given multiple updates on district facilities regarding how to handle expected growth and the condition of the infrastructure. The facilities that were the biggest surprise were Highland Elementary and Sandstone Middle School.

**Loveland honored at dance championships**

Senior dancer Aristeia Loveland was honored at the Oregon Dance And Drill Championships by being selected to the 2017 All State Dance Team.

Aristeia was quoted as saying "all my hard work has been rewarded and a dream come true."

It's pretty exciting too because Aristeia is the "first" in about 25 years to be a Hermiston dancer selected for the all-state team.

Great job, Aristeia, we are so proud of you.

VIRGIL, SHERRY AND MELANIE LOVELAND
HERMISTON

The board was given a very detailed third-party report in 2014 on the condition of all the facilities. It was not a surprise for any board member to see Rocky Heights receive a low score given it is the oldest of the elementary schools and was on the list for future replacement should another bond campaign go forth. What was surprising, however, was Rocky Heights, built in 1962, unexpectedly received a better score than Highland Hill, which was built in 1980.

Highland Hills received the lowest score of all the facilities due to infrastructure degrading and safety. Like Rocky Heights, it too needs replacement with a larger, more modern and safer facility that can be used for children for many years to come.

Sandstone Middle School also showed its age with the report suggesting much-needed improvements to mechanical systems, the roof and exterior doors and windows that are showing significant rust and corrosion.

What we were presented in these reports was enough to convince me that Rocky Heights and Highland Hills were both in need of replacement with larger, safer and higher capacity schools. Especially when considering the amount of money it would take to repair them and still be short

classrooms space.

Please join me in voting yes for our children in May on the Hermiston School District bond.

GREG HARRIS
HERMISTON

Good schools are necessary

Historically, Hermiston has strongly supported its schools. Looking purely at the dollars and cents; we can see that our community as a whole significantly benefits from these fantastic facilities.

Hermiston School District has become a vital part of our community's economic development. When you moved here, what was the first thing you searched out beside a job? For my family and me, it was the

schools.

An independent study by EcoNorthwest quantified the economic impacts our community receives from the use of school district facilities by either district-hosted or outside-hosted events. In 2013-14, it was \$7.3 million and is expected to be more in the subsequent years. That alone creates 78 jobs within our community while also supporting numerous small businesses.

Also, an independent analysis performed by Eleco Limited, found the May 2017 bond election would return a whopping \$184 million over the next ten years. Where else in government can you see a net positive return of almost 2:1 on your tax investment?

The last bond measure cost \$1.40 per \$1,000 of assessed value for \$69 million; today's bond is \$.90 per \$1,000 of assessed value for \$104 million. Because our community continues to grow and add businesses and homeowners, we are sharing that cost over a larger taxing base. There is a direct connection between our investment in schools and our increased tax base.

Schools are the very definition of community and a primary source of Hermiston's economic vitality. Join me in voting YES for the May 16 Hermiston School District Bond election.

DAVE DROTZMANN,
MAYOR OF HERMISTON

Vote yes for school bond

On May 16, 2017, voters will have a chance to vote on the approval of the Hermiston School District bond of \$104 million dollars. I am writing to encourage the voters to vote yes for the bond.

Our community is growing at an exceptionally fast rate and in seven years, according to Portland State

University, it is expected for the district's population to grow 24 percent. That is approximately 800-1,100 students. To give you an idea of how large that number is, the high school can only accommodate 1,600 students at the maximum. Hermiston High School is very close to that maximum number currently. So if the high school were to have a closed campus lunch, it would be extremely challenging to hold that many students in just for lunch. Not only is the high school dealing with capacity issues, but many elementary schools have similar situations. Without the needed expansions, there will be many problems in the future.

Adding modules will not solve this problem. We would need a total of 56 new modules in order for the predicted students to fit in the school district. The schools do not have enough space to have that many modules rented and put on site. As a student at Hermiston High School, I've learned that modules can cause some problems, including having to walk across campus just to use the bathroom or having to walk across campus to return a book. The school district needs a long-term solution to the enrollment growth and the bond will give the district that solution.

If you vote yes on the bond, you won't just be saying yes to expand the district, but you will also be saying yes to creating a better education for the students now and for the students in the future. Make sure to vote yes for the Hermiston School District bond to improve the future of the district and future education of your community's students. These are your kids or your neighbor's kids, they need to be educated happily and safely!

EMILY WADKINS
HERMISTON

UMATILLA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ANNUAL MEETING & MEMBERSHIP DINNER



Saturday, April 22, 2017
Hermiston Conference Center
5 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Our Annual Meeting theme
"Reaching New Heights" is a recognition of
the milestones reached over the last 80 years
and what we expect in 2017.
As always, attendance is free to UEC members.
We hope you will join us!



Featured Speaker
Bob Welch, of Eugene
a celebrated author,
will highlight Umatilla
Electric's 2017
Annual Meeting!

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