

# Positive growth occurs when we're open to change

Change presents itself again as a pathway toward a community vision, revitalizing downtown and becoming more efficient at managing the Hermiston Community and Conference Center. One of the great things that I often hear from people discussing Hermiston is, "you're such a progressive, forward-looking community that doesn't get hung-up on name hierarchy or past accomplishments. You just keep moving forward to make your community better." We've been a successful, growing community because we embrace change as a way toward greater opportunities.



**Drotzmann**

More than 2,200 community members participated in the "Livable Hermiston" public outreach campaign to gauge the community's priorities. Two of the top concepts were providing added youth and family activities while revitalizing downtown through projects that will attract visitors.

On Tuesday, the City Council used that clear community message to consider

bringing the operations of the community center under the umbrella of our Parks & Recreation Department.

Make no mistake; this decision is not about 'closing the community center,' frankly, it's the exact opposite. Operating the community center through the Parks & Recreation Department will allow for increased space for youth activities, while still being available for community events.

Two years ago, the Chamber provided me with many historical news clippings regarding the original fundraising drive for the community center in 1994. I enjoyed reading about this great community fundraising project spearheaded by names we all still recognize today, such as Bryan Wolfe, Tim Mabry, and Ed Brookshier. I was struck by an article in the Herald's special "Community Center Insert" on May 17, 1994, titled, "New center is big business." An excerpt from the article reads, "both the (fundraising) committee and the donors have gone to

great pains to stress that this is a community center, not a convention center."

Now as the city looks to refocus the community center back to its original intent, we invite the Hermiston Chamber to build on our longstanding positive relationship of supporting Hermiston business and the needs of our community.

The city is offering free office space in a newly renovated portion of one of our only historic buildings downtown. If the Hermiston Chamber wishes, we see significant long-term opportunities to continue supporting each other by possibly contracting with them to operate the historic building as a visitor's center which will attract people downtown and allow them space to continue to support Hermiston's fantastic local businesses.

I know change can be unnerving at times, although it helps to remember that change and working together is what has made Hermiston the community it is today.

DR. DAVID DROTZMANN  
MAYOR OF HERMISTON

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I am writing in support of the school bond which is to be voted on, May 16, 2017 for Hermiston. As a student that has been through every level of my education in the Hermiston School District, I have seen and experienced many problems within the facilities. The majority of these problems will be addressed with the passing of the 2017 school bond.

I began my schooling at Highland Hills Elementary School in kindergarten. I remember my parents telling me about their experiences at the same elementary school, and though it did not occur to me then, Highland Hills was obviously aging. Providing enough space for all the students was a problem. There was more than one space used as a classroom that wasn't intended to be. These spaces had to transform into rooms since the regular classrooms and modulars were already at full capacity. Highland Hills also does not have a separate spot designated as a cafeteria so our gym doubled as the lunch room. As I have returned to HHES many times since I graduated from the fifth grade, I have seen the mechanical, structural, and safety issues that need to be addressed.

When I finished the fifth grade, I moved to Sandstone Middle School. There, for three years, I formed friendships, created bonds with the teachers in Team Jefferson, and struggled to close the stall doors in the girls' bathrooms because most of the locks were broken. Alongside my peers, I dealt with the inconsistent heating and air conditioning systems, which seemed to be under maintenance more often than not. There were many times that we felt sorry for the maintenance crew who were constantly fighting the same problems over and over.

Finally, I made my way to Hermiston High School and am still seeing many of the same problems that the school faced when I was a freshman. The most prominent of these issues is the overcrowding that is threatening to get worse. Hermiston High School was originally built to accommodate fewer students than we currently house. With our school district projecting to gain another 1,100 students in the next seven years, it is near impossible to add more students to the classrooms, hallways, and public spaces. The three modulars recently

added are not built to last the wear and tear of thousands of students for very long and they were placed over parking spaces that were already dwindling in numbers. More students and teachers are being forced to park on streets and in neighborhoods surrounding the high school because every space is taken by the time they arrive. Traffic within the parking lots is a safety risk because there is a lack of order and space for cars to be able to enter and exit. It is causing back-ups in road traffic and cars parked on the street make it unsafe for drivers and pedestrians who cannot see oncoming cars. Lastly, we have countless issues with our electrical, plumbing, and technology systems. An extra thousand students in our schools that are getting enough wear as they are will be a risk to our education and safety.

Though my career as a student in the Hermiston School District will be ending in the next two years and I will soon become a taxpayer that will share the expense, I urge voters to vote "YES" on the 2017 School Bond.

REED MIDDLETON  
JUNIOR, HERMISTON HIGH SCHOOL

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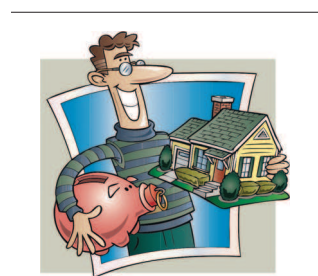
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