



## EOTEC WILL RECRUIT GENERAL MANAGER

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Construction is underway on the rodeo arena at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center.

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center board will start recruiting a general manager after getting a consensus from the Hermiston City Council and Umatilla County Commission.

The position will pay \$70,000 to \$85,000 per year and will supervise an administrative assistant and maintenance/operations position.

"We need to get good management," commissioner Larry Givens said. "It's got to be done, and we need to do it as soon as possible."

The council and commission discussed the plan during a joint meeting Thursday night. The EOTEC board had previously asked the two partners in the project to approve a similar plan, but they asked for salary figures before they were willing to sign off on it.

Byron Smith, EOTEC chair, said the Pendleton Convention Center's new manager, Pat Beard, will make around \$80,000. The manager for the TRAC facility in the Tri-Cities makes \$84,000 to \$113,000, while the Linn County Expo Center manager makes \$71,000 to \$90,000 per year.

Smith said at \$80,000 per year (plus \$50,000 for the maintenance position and \$40,000 for the administrative assistant) the city and council

would each need to chip in \$75,000 next year for operations, compared with \$45,000 this year. He said that's based on a conservative estimate for revenue so it could end up being less if, like this year, the center exceeded revenue projections.

Smith said those numbers only included salary, not benefits, but EOTEC is not a PERS employer and does not offer health insurance so benefit costs are low.

City councilor John Kirwan said he liked the idea of basing a part of the general manager's salary on a commission or bonus system tied to how much revenue EOTEC makes each year. Other councilors and commissioners agreed.

Smith said it would be tricky to find the right formula between base salary and incentive, but it was something the EOTEC board could come up with.

Mayor David Drotzmann said he was concerned it would be difficult to recruit a quality manager without offering health insurance as a benefit. Smith said he had already begun looking into if it was possible to add the manager to the city's health insurance or find another reasonable option.

During the public comment section prior to Smith's presentation, several neigh-

bors testified they were still seeing problems generated by EOTEC in their neighborhood.

Richard Meisner questioned the city's decision to lease water rights from a Stanfield Irrigation customer and said he was concerned it would negatively affect neighbors' ability to get the irrigation water they needed. Other neighbors brought up the thumping bass noise they said they can hear until midnight during events, and that people often leave the event driving recklessly.

"People coming from these facilities are drinking and driving, no doubt in my mind," Chris Waive said.

Commissioner Bill Elferring said he would discuss the need for extra patrols after events with Sheriff Terry Rowan, who was present at the meeting, and EOTEC business manager Heather Cannell said she would begin sending event information to the sheriff's office so they would know when large parties were finishing up at EOTEC.

The meeting ended with a tour of the fair and rodeo grounds, which are nearing the home stretch of construction with a goal of being completed in July.

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# Gomolski to join school board

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**  
Staff writer

Come July 1, the Hermiston School Board will have one new face.

Mark Gomolski won his write-in campaign to the vacant seat with 14 votes, and will join six other board members as they prepare for a year of big decisions.

Gomolski said he became interested in the position after attending several sessions this spring about the bond issue, and coming away with more questions than answers.

"When I got my ballot, I noticed position 3 was vacant. I thought, maybe I can help out, figure out what's really going on," he said.

Gomolski said he wants to support schools in any way he can, but did not vote in favor of the bond.

"I'm very pro-education," he said. "But I want to make sure the money is going to the right place."

He said one of his concerns was when the district discussed the increased capacity new schools would provide. Each of the existing schools the district had planned to rebuild were scheduled to be increased by a certain capacity, but Gomolski said he was interested in finding out why the district wanted to build new buildings for existing schools, rather than building a larger school on the new Theater Lane property.

He also said he was concerned about maintenance issues at the school.

"I understand Milton-Freewater just got a new bond to replace a school close to 100 years old," he said. "Why is maintenance not keeping up with schools only 30 to 50 years old?"

He said he was aware that there were likely other



STAFF PHOTO BY JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN

Mark Gomolski won the write-in campaign for Hermiston School Board position 3. He will assume the role July 1.

factors, but said more than anything else, he'd just like to find out some answers.

"I'm sure I'm not alone," he said. "Maybe I can find out and share."

He said while on the board, he also looks forward to learning more about Hermiston's graduation rates, and the alternative school program that was recently absorbed into the high school.

He said he also wants to discuss more career-based classes for students.

"A lot of students may not be looking for higher education, but maybe vocational schools. There's a need for trades across the country, and even here."

He noted the student-built homes on Angus Court.

"Those are great opportunities for kids," he said.

Though this is Gomolski's first time holding elected office, he has worked in public service for many years. He moved to Hermiston three years ago, after spending most of his life in Chicago. He worked under the Cook County commissioners and found himself in Hermiston in 2008, when he was part of a team seeking

candidates for their police force. Several officers from Hermiston applied, and Gomolski came out to interview them. While here, he made friends and fell in love with the area.

"When it came time to plan my retirement, this was where I wanted to come," he said.

He has wasted no time in getting involved locally. He volunteers at a book club at the high school, and for the Our Lady of Angels soup kitchen. He's a member of Rotary, Hispanic Advisory Committee, the Chamber of Commerce and the Knights of Columbus. He also ran for city council last year, a bid he lost. But he said he's open to trying again.

"I believe in citizen participation," he said.

Gomolski said he looks forward to working with the board, and anyone else in the public.

"I look forward to doing all I can to help," he said. "Maybe bringing fresh ideas or a different perspective."

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## Police still looking for suspect in recent fatal shooting

Hermiston Herald

An arrest warrant has been issued for Tyree Quaddray Houfmuse, a suspect in the killing of James Cragun in Hermiston on May 27.

The Hermiston Police Department on Friday released a statement about the investigation.

"We wanted to push out this information in hopes a member of the public either in our area or in the Pacific Northwest would assist by calling their local authorities if they know the whereabouts of Mr. Houfmuse," said Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston. "This investigation is still very active as an incredible amount of physical evidence has been seized and will be processed by the Oregon State Police crime lab."

Edmiston said information about the physical evidence in the investigation would not be disclosed.

Houfmuse, 34, was identified as a person of interest after James John Cragun, 38, was found dead from gunshot wounds at his home, Viewcrest Apartment

complex at 525 S.W. 13th Place, around 2:35 a.m. Saturday, May 27.

Officers said at that time they would like to speak to Houfmuse about the incident. Houfmuse is African-American, 6-foot-1, 200 to 240 pounds and has several tattoos, including a large rose on the left side of his neck. According to the statement, Houfmuse's last known residence was Tacoma, Washington.

Houfmuse has been arrested for several other violent disputes in Hermiston and Tri-Cities, most recently for a shooting in November 2014 outside a Kennewick bar that left another man paralyzed. He was arrested in Hermiston shortly after, but a jury in 2015 determined that he had acted in self-defense.

In 2005, Houfmuse pleaded not guilty to an attempted murder charge, in which he allegedly fired shots into a moving vehicle with three people in it. No one was injured, and the charge of attempted murder was dismissed. But Houfmuse was charged with menacing, assault in the third degree, unlawful use of

a weapon against another, criminal mischief and unlawful possession of a firearm.



Houfmuse

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