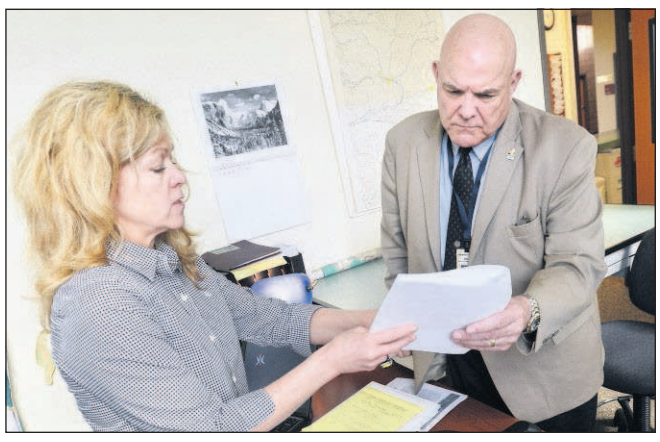
Mabbott takes Umatilla city post

By JADE McDOWELL
STAFF WRITER



FILE PHOTO

Umatilla County Planning Director Tamra Mabbott and Umatilla County Commissioner Bill Elfering look over zoning laws at the Stafford Hansell Government Center in Hermiston in this file photo. Mabbott has taken a job as the city of Umatilla's new community development director.

Longtime Umatilla County planning director Tamra Mabbott is leaving the county to become the city of Umatilla's new community development director.

Mabbott has been in county planning for 26 years, including 15 as planning director for Umatilla County. She said in a statement that the job would be a change from what she's used to but she is excited to be part of Umatilla's future.

"Citizens are engaged. City Council and staff are focused and enthusiastic. New development is coming to Umatilla. It's the perfect recipe for success in the community," she said.

Mabbott, who lives just outside Umatilla, has been working with the city in her county capacity to help them create a "vision plan" for downtown. In her new position she will oversee the planning, building, parks and recreation, code enforcement and Geographic Information Systems for the city.

"She will be busy," City Manager Russ Pelleberg said. "She will have her hands full, but not all of this will be handed to her on day one."

Mabbott starts Sept. 1, and Umatilla County is advertising her position.

Pelleberg said the city was excited to have someone with her experience, integrity and accomplishments take the new position.

He said he has wanted to create a "community development director" department head for about a year to help implement new initiatives for the city such as creation of a recreation program, and to focus on development of the city in general. He said he and Mabbott have been working together behind the scenes on a few economic development projects he hopes to announce soon, and he has been trying to recruit her for a while.

"A lot is about to happen," he said. "The timing is just perfect."

Pelleberg also announced that Jason Barron, who has worked for the city of Umatilla's public works department for 16 years, is now Umatilla's public works director.

Pelleberg was public works director prior to becoming Umatilla city manager in early 2016. At that time he agreed to continue to oversee public works while serving as city manager, but promoted Barron to public works supervisor to share some of the administrative workload.

"Over the last year I've been kind of grooming him to make that step up," Pelleberg said.

He said Barron will be a key player in the city's organization as they move forward on some "very exciting and important infrastructure and development projects."

In a third staff shake-up, the city is looking for a new city planner. Pelleberg said former city planner Bill Searles left of his own accord to take a job in another city. In January Searles filed a complaint against Pelleberg with the city's human resources department, which he declined to discuss publicly, after Pelleberg gave him a disciplinary letter criticizing his performance.

Mabbott will oversee the new city planner and planning commission.

Former Irrigon coach safe after Barcelona attack

By JADE MCDOWELL
STAFF WRITER

FILE PHOTO

Former Irrigon boy's basketball coach Mitch Thompson is now a graduate assistant for the Oregon State University men's basketball program in Corvallis. He is with the Oregon State basketball team in Barcelona, Spain, and the team was staying in a motel near where a terrorist attack occurred on Thursday, Aug. 17, 2017.

Former Irrigon basketball coach Mitch Thompson is among the Oregon State University basketball staff and team members safe after a terrorist attack outside their Barcelona hotel killed more than a dozen people Thursday.

The attack killed 15 people and injured dozens more after a van plowed through crowds in what Spanish authorities are calling a terrorist incident. Thompson, who is a video coordinator for the OSU men's basketball team, reported on Facebook Thursday that he and the team were safe but had been staying on the street where it happened.

When reached via text he said the team wasn't commenting further beyond a statement released by OSU's athletic department that the OSU community "extends its thoughts and prayers for all those injured and affected by this incident" and had not yet determined what the remainder of the team's trip would look like in light of the tragedy.

Earlier in the day assistant coach Gregg Gottlieb tweeted that the "tragedy happened right in front of us as our team just sat down for pregame meal." The Beavers had been preparing to play their first exhibition game against a Spanish team on a trip that included several other teams from American universities. The team from Clemson University was also staying in the hotel but reported they were unharmed.

Thompson, the son of Hermiston residents Joe Thompson and Cindy Gammell-Thompson and a Hermiston High graduate, was Oregon Athletic Association Coach of the Year in 2015 after coaching Irrigon High School boys' basketball team to a state championship. He is just starting his second season with the Beavers as a graduate assistant.

OSU Head Coach Wayne Tinkle posted a video statement from the team's motel to let family, friends and fans know that all the team members and staff were safe. The video was potsted to the team's Facebook page and can be found here: https://www.facebook.com/BeaverMBB/videos/10155224570348127/

City seeks new finance director

The city of Hermiston is on the hunt for a new finance director after Amy Palmer's exit.

Palmer said at a recent city council meeting she was leaving to care for a family member. She was hired in 2012 and came to the city with more than 20 years of public sector accounting experience.

The city has opened a nationwide search for Palmer's replacement using a recruiting firm it has used to find other department heads in the past. The position, listed with a salary range of $92,964 to $113,112, is open until filled. A first review of applications is scheduled for Sept. 17.

A job description and application can be found online at hermiston.or.us/employment/finance-director.

Fair and rodeo prompt extra donations

HERMISTON HERALD

Now that the public has had a chance to see the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo in action at their new venue, it could prompt more donations to both events to help pay for next year.

At the fair's kickoff dinner, state Rep. Greg Smith announced a personal $10,000 donation, and rodeo board member Dennis Barnett said so far there have been a few additional donations to the nonprofit Friends of the Fair and Rodeo prompted by people seeing the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center for themselves last week.

He said donations to the Friends of the Fair and Rodeo, which is a separate entity from EOTEC, can be used with EOTEC's blessing for fair and rodeo-related improvements like adding irrigation and grass to the overflow parking area to keep down the dust next year.

The rodeo acquired some debt for things like the mercantile building, additional bleachers and landscaping around the arena that the board wanted for the 2017 rodeo but EOTEC did not have the funds to pay for.

Barnett said donors can specify if they want the money to go toward the Umatilla County Fair or Farm-City Pro Rodeo, or they can leave it up to a joint committee to determine where the money is most needed.

"As we continue to try and make the facility the best it can be, there is always going to be a continued need for more funds," he said.

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