

# DEBATE

Continued from Page A1 completes each year before graduation, including new paint and window-washing.

## Kennison Field

Only 14 percent of the 859 survey respondents “very strongly agree” with using Kennison Field for graduation.

The venue would only seat 2,400 including students, staff and the band, meaning attendance would still be limited and the district would still do its usual preparations of the gym in case of inclement weather.

Wayland estimates using Kennison Field would cost an average of \$25,878 per year. That includes the \$11,883 for preparing the gym, plywood to cover the field (Wayland averaged a per-year cost on the assumption the plywood could be used for five years), repairs to turf damaged during set-up and cleanup, chair rentals and upgrades to the stadium on par with what the district does to prepare the gym.

“People’s expectations of attending a sporting event in the rain is a lot different than the graduation of their only child,” Wayland said.

He said the estimates for

seating and cost did not include renting any additional bleachers.

Board member Mark Gomoleski questioned whether the district really needed to spend so much money on things like new paint every year, especially if the gym would only be used in case of emergency, but Sherman, Principal Tom Spoo and Superintendent Tricia Mooney all said that Hermiston has a tradition of treating graduation as a very formal, serious event and they didn’t want to compromise on quality.

“This is a culminating event for our families,” Spoo said. “It’s very important ... We expect this to be formal, and we try to show that we have class. It’s something parents will remember and we take pride in that.”

## EOTEC

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center had the most positive response from the community survey, with 46 percent of respondents saying they very strongly agreed with using the venue for graduation.

Wayland said the indoor event center would not accommodate any more seating than the high school gym, but the rodeo arena could seat 5,000 people, removing the need to give each student limited tickets

for family members.

The downside of the arena is that Wayland estimated it would cost an average of \$34,678 per year to host graduation there, including the money to prepare the gym in case of bad weather. He said EOTEC doesn’t have a set price for renting its arena yet, but based on prices for the event center he guessed it would cost about \$2,500, plus the district would have to buy plywood to cover the dirt arena floor, rent audio/visual equipment and put money into getting the venue graduation-ready.

“The arena prep and clean-up is going to be significant because we’re going to have to spend a lot of time, a lot of manpower, to get the arena right,” he said.

Wayland said it would also be difficult to make graduation accessible for students with disabilities, and the plywood panels could shift in the dirt and create tripping hazards.

## Toyota Center

The Toyota Center in Kennewick was the most polarizing of the four options presented to the community, with about 36 percent of respondents strongly agreeing with the choice, but 37 percent strongly disagreeing.

On the positive side, the Toyota Center would allow

students to invite as many friends and family members as they want, and is by far the cheapest option because the center is used to holding multiple graduations per year and would require little work on the district’s part. Wayland said if the district signed a five-year contract it could expect to spend about \$6,550 per year, including transportation costs.

The downside, according to Wayland, was that moving graduation out of town would not inspire the same community pride that having it in Hermiston facilities engenders. The district would also need to provide transportation to parents and students without the means to drive themselves up to the Tri-Cities, and would have to compete with other area schools for scheduling.

At the end of the presentation, Sherman said she knew that whatever decision the board made, some would disagree, but she appreciated that at the beginning Wayland had named “what’s best for the students” as the top consideration.

“This was very helpful,” she said. “We don’t ask for this haphazardly; we want to use this information so we can make the best decision.”

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# NEW YEAR

Continued from Page A1

glad to finally have kids in the building.

She said one of her biggest areas of focus at the beginning of the school year will be building relationships, whether it’s between colleagues, between teachers and students or between the school and the community.

Over at Sunset Elementary, Petersen was having an exciting first day of her own as the final minutes of the school day ticked down and the school had still not been given a master list for which student rides which bus. The hiccup meant staff — including Petersen — had to carefully check each student’s address before directing them to the right bus.

“There will be plenty of people out there to help sort children and verify addresses and get them on the correct bus,” Petersen assured staff during her first all-school announcement over the intercom.

As she emerged from her office a moment later, she greeted the parents who had congregated around the front office and offered them the same assurance.

“It was a good first day, we’re just working on getting the busing figured out,” she said.

After that she was off to reassure the students who were just emerging from classrooms, eager to get home and tell their families about their first day.

“It’s OK,” she said, giving a quick shoulder squeeze to a crying boy in a Mario-themed backpack. “If you go to this school then we have your name, and we’ll get you on the right bus.”

Once all of the students were successfully sent home and Petersen had conducted a quick staff

meeting, she said she was anxious to begin applying the curriculum that staff had been working to put together to make each one of the school year’s days count.

Petersen’s background is in English as a Second Language and literacy development, so getting students reading and writing is a major passion for her. She said the staff’s goal is to get 100 percent of students reading at grade level by the end of the year. To do that she has been working with teachers on “going deeper” in implementing best practices, and has created a small but well-stocked “instructional resource library” adjacent to her office where teachers can check out the array of literature on education that she has built up over the years.

Petersen is also focused on improving attendance, increasing ESL work in the youngest grades and making sure all students are being challenged at their level, whether they are behind their peers or ahead of them. She calls it finding their “productive struggle.”

“It’s when they’re getting pushed, but it’s not so hard they’re not learning anymore,” she said.

Petersen said one thing she appreciated about Hermiston School District is that the district cares more about whether something has been proven effective than whether it is the latest educational fad.

Schools across the district, including Sunset and Desert View, also welcomed new teachers on Monday. Petersen said Sunset’s new teachers include a former Sunset student and an educator who came to the school from Malaysia.

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## BY THE WAY

### BY THE WAY

Continued from Page A1

gan; and Aitor Irusta and Steve Cameron.

In other links news, local golfers, representing Big River, Echo Hills Golf Course and Willow Run Golf Course (Boardman), fared well in the Columbia Basin Senior Blues Golf Association event held Aug. 14 at Big River. In the Columbia Division, Jeff Boedigheimer (72) was second in gross; and in net, D. Richelderfer (79-12=67)

placed third and Jim Johnson (82-15=67) tied for fifth. In the Blue Division, Ron Bunch and Ed Jonas tied for first, both shooting an 83; and Dick Lowry (88) was fourth; in net, Don Rebman (84-18=66) was second; and tying for fifth were Don Obrist (91-21=70) and Rod Panches (92-22=70). Mike Hug (97) was third in gross in the Senior Division; and Jim Kietzke (98-30=68) placed third in net. The Sept. 11 tournament is at The Dalles Country Club.

Gina Wilson, a parole

and probation officer with the Morrow County Sheriff’s Office, is set to graduate in a ceremony with the 75th Basic Parole & Probation Officer Class.

She will be honored Friday at 11 a.m. at Oregon Public Safety Academy in Salem. Jeremiah Stromberg, assistant director of the Oregon Department of Corrections, is the guest speaker. The event is free and open to the public.

The Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training provides training to more than

25,000 students each year throughout Oregon and at the academy in Salem. For more information, visit [www.oregon.gov/dpsst](http://www.oregon.gov/dpsst).

Hermiston’s street department will be replacing sections of sidewalk along East Main Street between Highway 395 and East Fifth Street starting Sept. 5. The work will replace sections of concrete that have been pushed up by tree roots and become a tripping hazard. The city plans to complete the work by the end of September.



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