



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

A black SUV is towed from inside the Umatilla Post Office after it crashed through the side of the building Saturday just before noon, destroying mailboxes and parts of the building. Preliminary information indicates it was accidental, and no one was transported to the hospital or cited.

SUV crashes through Umatilla post office

HERMISTON HERALD

A sport utility vehicle crashed through the side of the Umatilla Post Office Saturday, traveling through the outer wall, a line of mailboxes and into an employee-only area.

Umatilla Police Chief Darla Huxel said one woman who had been in the building at the time was taken by a private vehicle to seek medical care for minor injuries.

The driver was Edward Olwell, 80, of Plymouth, Washington. Huxel said he was at the fuel station next door shortly before noon when the vehicle crossed the street and struck the post office.

The driver reported that it was accidental, and he was not cited.

"I'm not sure if he made a mistake and hit the gas or there was a malfunction with the pedal," she said.

Umatilla Police Department and Oregon State Police responded, and the vehicle was pulled out of the inside of the building and towed away.

The post office was closed Monday for Columbus Day, but a sign posted on the door stated that mail for customers with boxes 1121-1818 would be delivered at the window to customers with identification starting Tuesday.

Harkenrider Center on pace to beat winter

Council tours senior center, then approves raise for police

By JADE McDOWELL
STAFF WRITER

The Harkenrider Center is on time and on budget.

Hermiston city councilors toured the partially completed senior center Monday before their regular meeting to learn about the building's floor plan and progress.

"It's going very well I think," said Jared Wendland of G2 Construction.

He said G2 is working hard to get exterior work finished before winter hits so that bad weather won't affect the timeline.

The Harkenrider Center, located near the Hermiston Public Library and visible from Highway 395, is expected to open in March 2018. It is 7,000 square feet with a 4,000 square foot unfinished basement. The main floor includes a reception area, great room, fireplace, breakout rooms, offices, restrooms, commercial kitchen and elevator. The outdoors will feature a bus drop-off, parking, covered deck, landscaping and a path leading to Highway 395.

The former senior center was 5,000 square feet but was demolished recently when Hermiston School District took ownership of the former fairgrounds. Willard Fordice, the senior center's bus driver, said Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church was gracious in offering its parish hall for senior meals



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

Part of the Harkenrider Center's great room as seen during a tour by the Hermiston City Council on Monday.

in the interim, but the seniors are looking forward to having their own space again.

"Some of them can't believe it's that big," he said of a recent tour the seniors took. He said Hermiston Senior Center president Irene Miller, 96, was "tickled to death about it."

City councilors said they have had people asking about the project and asked that some sort of sign be added along Highway 395 across from the Holiday Inn Express so that people would know that was what was being built.

"I'm excited," Mayor David Drotzmann said. "It looks nice."

On Monday during their regular meeting the council also approved a con-

tract with the police union. The contract was supposed to be completed before July, but City Manager Byron Smith said a mediator was finally brought in on Sept. 26 to help finish negotiations.

The contract approved Monday provides for a 2.75 percent salary increase retroactively dated to July 1, 2017, another 2.75 percent increase on Jan. 1, 2018 and a 1 percent increase on July 1, 2018. It also gives a \$200 allowance for boots, increases bilingual pay from 2 percent to 3 percent, gives 5 percent assignment pay to officers promoted to a new corporal position and expands the definition of sick leave and bereavement leave to fit the one used by the city's non-

union employees. Association members agreed to pay 2.5 percent of current health insurance premiums starting July 2018.

Smith said the contract was a little above what the city had budgeted for, including 2.5 percent salary increases, but didn't have a total dollar amount off the top of his head.

Smith also reported to the city council that he had met with the owners of Ranch & Home, and they reported that problems getting electrical contractors had delayed progress on their new store on South Highway 395, and they would likely not open until February or March. The city had offered the company financial incentives for gaining their occupancy permit by Jan. 1.

Hurtado faces charges after officer-involved shooting

HERMISTON HERALD

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson will bring charges against a man who allegedly pointed a gun at a deputy and was shot in late September.

A Morrow County grand jury recommended bringing the charges based on evidence presented by the district attorney.

Efren Hurtado, 26, will be charged with unlawful use of a weapon, menacing and carrying a concealed weapon. He is currently lodged in the Umatilla County Jail.

Hurtado was shot in the early hours of Sept. 22 in a parked Chevy Tahoe on the westbound side of Interstate 84 near the Boardman exit.

Nelson said the grand jury heard testimony and video indicating that Hurta-

do pointed his gun at Morrow County Sheriff's Deputy Aaron Haak, although Hurtado did not fire the gun.

According to Nelson, Haak did not expect anyone to be inside the vehicle, which he was tagging to be towed. But as he approached, Hurtado opened the rear passenger door, looked out, and pointed a gun at Haak.

Haak quickly fired two rounds, one of which struck Hurtado in the side of the head, dropping him but not penetrating his skull.

According to Nelson, Haak rushed back to his car for cover, called dispatch, and waited for other police officers to arrive. Officers arrived to find Hurtado unconscious with a revolver near his hand. Hurtado had been recovering at a Portland hospital.



Hurtado

By PHIL WRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston police are cracking down on jaywalkers on Highway 395.

Police Chief Jason Edmiston said his department started a zero tolerance campaign for October to curtail pedestrians crossing the highway through town whenever or wherever they want. He warned jaywalkers should not expect mere warnings.

"When I say 'zero tolerance,' then enforcement is going to be the norm and education secondary," he said.

He said this campaign is akin to Oregon's emphasis on distracted driving. Jaywalkers can block traffic and worse, he said, and distracted pedestrians have walked into vehicles.

Edmiston said Hermiston police received several complaints about jaywalkers, primarily at the

intersection with Highland Avenue and between Orchard and Jennie avenues. He also said he saw it for himself while off duty. He added Highway 395 carries a fair share of truck traffic through town, and "those vehicles don't stop on a dime."

Various Oregon statutes can apply to jaywalking, Edmiston explained. Crossing against a light in an intersection, for example, can result in a ticket for failure to obey a traffic control device, while

walking into and blocking traffic can draw a disorderly conduct charge, which carries the potential for arrest. He said Hermiston officers are to double-check to make sure they apply the correct law depending on the circumstances.

"Our intent is not to increase arrests for disorderly conduct, but as written, it's a tool we can use if the circumstances apply," he said. "We want people to conform to the norms of society, and willy-nilly

walking across a four-lane or a five-lane highway ... because you feel like it, is not conforming."

Some residents might not like the crackdown, he said, but as Hermiston grows and new people come into the city, police need to continue enforcing the regulations and laws on the books. Edmiston said he anticipates the enforcement might generate complaints about jaywalking from other areas of town, but for now the focus is on Highway 395.

Police crack down on jaywalking

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