

City opts in to OSU Service District vote

HERMISTON HERALD

Voters in the city of Umatilla will have a chance to weigh in on the proposed Oregon State University Extension Service District after all.

The Umatilla City Council decided last week to reconsider a resolution putting the formation of a new taxing district on the May 2018 ballot. The resolution, which was previously rejected by the council, this time passed by a slim 3-2 margin with councilors Roak TenEyck, Selene Torres-Medrano and Mel Ray in favor and Michael Roxbury and Mark Keith opposed. Councilor Mark Ribich was not present at Tues-

day's meeting.

The reversal means that every city in Umatilla and Morrow counties will now be able to vote on whether the new tax district moves forward. If created, the district would collect 33 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value to help support OSU Extension programs, such as 4-H, Master Gardeners and both agricultural research stations in Hermiston and Pendleton.

It was Ray who ultimately proved to be the swing vote Tuesday, changing his position after he said he was contacted personally by two residents wondering why they would not be allowed to have a say in the matter.

Hermiston denies \$10,000 water credit for EOTEC

By JADE MCDOWELL
STAFF WRITER

The city may co-own the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, but councilors weren't showing any favoritism Monday when they denied the EOTEC board's request for a \$10,000 credit on its sewer bill.

In September the center switched to irrigating with water from Stanfield Irrigation District, but before that EOTEC was using city of Hermiston water. City Manager Byron Smith, who represents the city on the EOTEC board, said the city charges sewer rates in conjunction with how much water a customer uses, assuming most of it drains into Hermiston's wastewater system to be recycled by the city. In the case of EOTEC, however, most of the water bought from the city was being used for construction, irrigation and dust control.

"It didn't need treated (at the city's recycled water facility), it just went into the ground," he said.

In light of that, EOTEC asked for a \$10,000 credit toward future sewer payments. Councilor Doug Primmer disagreed.

"We don't charge people less in the summertime when they're watering their lawns," he said. "That water doesn't go to the sewer."

Smith said water customers can pay to install

a separate water meter on their irrigation systems if they didn't want sewer charges attached to that portion of their water usage, but in the end Primmer, Lori Davis and Manuel Gutierrez outvoted Rod Hardin and Clara Beas Fitzgerald and denied the credit.

On Monday the city also approved a resolution allowing businesses to count city parking lots on Orchard Avenue toward their off-street parking.

City planner Clint Spencer said the two lots, comprised of 60 parking spaces on either side of Southwest Third Street, seem to have been built mostly for the Umatilla County Fair, which has moved. Several homes and offices along Third Street are zoned for commercial use and up for lease or for sale, and Spencer said it made sense to allow business opening within 500 feet of the city lots to count five spaces of those lots to meet their minimum off-street parking requirements.

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Marine Corp veteran Aaron Wetterling, left, and Oregon National Guard veteran Ed Higginbotham eat together at the Hermiston Veterans Day breakfast.

STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL.

Veterans' sacrifices recognized

By JADE MCDOWELL
STAFF WRITER

Pastor Dean Hackett had tears in his eyes as he tried to tell the veterans in front of him how much their service meant to him.

"I appreciate you more than I can say for the sacrifices you have made," he said, his voice breaking.

Hundreds of people — mostly veterans and their families — had crowded into the Hermiston Conference Center Friday morning for a breakfast and program honoring veterans. Hackett conducted the program, wrapping up the speeches with a passionate recounting of the attack on Fort McHenry that inspired Francis Scott Key to write "The Star Spangled Banner" when he saw that the American flag still stood over the fort at dawn.

"She was severely torn and tattered by the cannonade, but Old Glory was still flying," Hackett said, thanking the veterans for continuing the defense of the flag and the freedoms it stands for.

Rep. Greg Smith also thanked the veterans for their service, asking them to stand as he praised them for their valor and unselfish sacrifices.

"They were ordinary people who responded in extraordinary ways," he said of all the men and women who have answered the call to defend their country since the first shots of the Revolutionary War were fired in Lexington.

Smith also had the military spouses, children, parents and siblings stand, thanking them for their own sacrifices as they kept the home fires burning and spent countless nights fearing for their loved ones' lives.

Veterans Al Rafferty and David Gallagher spoke about their own experiences serving, and their gratitude for the support they received after coming home.

"I lost my best friend there and I lost a lot of good friends," said Gallagher, who fought in the Vietnam war.

He said the other day when a tire on a truck blew he immediately dove for cover, because 49 years after his service those wartime experiences were still with him.

Rafferty, a Marine Corps veteran involved in Desert Storm, said joining

the VFW and Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association had provided him with camaraderie and support, and he encouraged other veterans present to seek out similar groups.

"Being able to talk to other veterans who have been in similar situations has really helped me cope with some of the things I've struggled with," he said.

Following Hackett's remarks, dancers from Dance Unlimited performed several patriotic numbers, interspersed with singing by husband and wife David and Alexis McCarthy, who performed war-era hits from the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra and Sonny and Cher.

Oregon National Guard veteran Ed Higginbotham, who served with the Pendleton unit in the 1970s, said he was glad he came to the Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce's annual Veterans Day event.

"It's a good breakfast," he said. "I enjoy the fellowship of seeing old friends and folks that have served in the community or are still serving."

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