



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The Hermiston City Council voted to grant Lamb Weston 15-year tax break on a \$220 million expansion at their Hermiston facility.

# Lamb Weston gets tax break

City, county will use revenue for water infrastructure project

By JADE MCDOWELL  
STAFF WRITER

A planned \$220 million expansion of Lamb Weston's french fry making operation in Hermiston will come with a 15-year property tax break. The Hermiston city council voted unanimously on Monday to offer its first Long Term Rural Enterprise Zone Agreement, in contrast to previous three to five year agreements with DuPont Pioneer Seed, Shearer's Foods and Eastern Oregon Telecom. While other enterprise zone agreements have exempted companies from paying anything in property taxes at all, the 15 year agreement offered to Lamb Weston includes payments in lieu of property taxes that will equal about 42 percent

of what the company would have paid in property taxes. Those payments will total \$1 million per year for 15 years, split evenly between the city of Hermiston and Umatilla County. Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the city had to work hard to compete with Boardman, Patterson and other regional Lamb Weston facilities for the expansion, which is expected to bring in at least 140 new jobs. The jobs are required to meet or exceed Umatilla County's average wage — currently about \$18 per hour — with a total compensation package worth 130 percent of the average wage. "It's safe to say this investment would not occur without the approval of this agreement," Morgan said. The Umatilla County Commission has already approved the agreement. Morgan said the city and county plan to work together to use the \$1 million per year from Lamb Weston to invest in a water infrastructure project designed to spur increased housing development in Hermiston, which should in turn create even

more jobs in Hermiston as workers previously living in the Tri-Cities instead pay for things like car insurance or doctors' visits locally. He cited a study done by Washington State University estimating that for every job created in the potato processing industry, 5.4 more jobs are created in the area indirectly. Councilor John Kirwan said the city has been working for a long time to lay the groundwork for large investments like Lamb Weston's, and it was exciting to see that work start to pay off. "We have 140 jobs, but that 140 jobs is not just 140, it's going to multiply by five," he said. Mayor David Drotzmann said the project was an example of how public investment often leads to private investment, and said he was pleased to see that the city and county planned to re-invest the payments by Lamb Weston back into a growth-inducing project instead of just melting it into their general fund. During the time for public comment on the project, Umatilla County Fire District 1 Chief Scott Stan-

ton congratulated the city on landing such a "big fish" and said he was pleased that the city was growing. However, he said while the city will be getting payments from Lamb Weston in lieu of property taxes, other taxing districts like the fire district will not, creating an added burden for the district without any added revenue. "There is no funding for public safety in this at all," he said. Ric Sherman, who is on the fire board, said the project would create a need for the district to increase staffing of Station 23, nearest Lamb Weston, to 24 hours a day. He and Stanton both urged the city to consider setting aside some of the money paid by Lamb Weston over the next 15 years to help the fire district cover the costs of protecting extra infrastructure and workers. Drotzmann said those were important points to consider, but overall the agreement was a win for the community. "These are the things you have to do to stay competitive and over time these things pay off," he said.



FILE PHOTO

Ariana Borden of Umatilla carries a quote from Martin Luther King Jr. while walking with her mother, Selene Torres, right, and Alex Hobbs, left, of Hermiston during the 2017 Peace Walk. This year's event, which includes a walk and program, is Monday, Jan. 15 — Martin Luther King Jr. Day — in Hermiston.

# Peace Walk takes steps to unite local community

By TAMMY MALGESINI  
COMMUNITY EDITOR

An event to help unite the community and bring awareness to the principles Martin Luther King Jr. stood for is being coordinated by the Black International Awareness Club. "If you don't remember our history, we are doomed to repeat it," said John Carbage, president of the Hermiston group. "We don't even want to back to that time in history." The event begins with a Peace Walk Monday, Jan. 15 — Martin Luther King Jr. Day — at 11 a.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 191 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston. From there, people will take a short stroll which will end in front of Hermiston City Hall, 180 N.E. Second St. The gathering will include the singing of the national anthem and a short speech, Carbage said. Then, the group will return to the church for an indoor program that includes words by several local pastors, as well as Rev. Robert Eadie of Greater Faith Missionary Baptist Church. In addition, Don Rome, one of the original founders of the Black International Awareness Club, will serve as the keynote speaker. Little Angels, a youth choir, also will perform. The event, Carbage said, always draws a good crowd. Last year's walk and program, even with snow-covered roads, attracted more than 100 people, he said. Carbage is especially encouraged when youths attend and participate, saying they are the future of our communities. A civil rights advocate, King, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in

1964, was also a pastor and author. In 1963, the famous "I Have a Dream" speech was delivered by King in front of more than 250,000 people in Washington, D.C. He was assassinated nearly five years later while on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee. Carbage said the Peace Walk and program is the last being coordinated by the Black International Awareness Club as the group is being abolished — officially changing its name to the Hermiston Cultural Awareness Club. With the new moniker, Carbage said he hopes the club will attract additional participants. "We want a more broad range of members," he said. "We want to bring awareness to all cultures in our community." Carbage invites everyone to get involved with the Hermiston Cultural Awareness Club. It meets the second Saturday of each month at 2 p.m. at Starbucks, 1235 N. First St., Hermiston. People of all races and cultures are invited to attend. The group coordinated "Around the World in One Fun Day," which was held at the close of the 2017 Hermiston Funfest. In its first year, the event highlighted various cultures with performances, food and informational booths. Carbage said the group is looking to expand on last year's event and hopes more people will get involved. "I think a lot of change happens with grassroots efforts," he said. For more information about the Martin Luther King Jr. Day event, club meetings or how to get involved, call Carbage at 541-701-7073.

# Don't want to pump your own gas?

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN  
STAFF WRITER

A new law allowing rural counties in Eastern Oregon to permit 24-hour self-serve gas stations does not mean changes are imminent. The rule, which went into effect Jan. 1, states that counties east of Portland with populations under 40,000 — including Morrow County, but not Umatilla County — can now let customers pump their own gas any time of day. For the past two years, rural counties in Oregon were permitted to offer self-serve stations between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. But employees at local stations say little will change for them. Brian Owshin, the manager at Love's Travel Stop in Boardman, said many people are now taking advantage of the new law. But he said they will continue to have staff available for those who don't want — or don't know how — to pump their own gas. "We always have someone to assist, at least until 6 p.m.," he said, referring to the old law. Owshin said he didn't



EO FILE PHOTO

Love's Travel Stop near Boardman and others in Morrow County will continue offering an gas pump attendant until 6 p.m., even as new state law allows stations to no longer provide the service.

know whether the law would affect the number of employees at the station in the long term. But he said for the immediate future, no changes were planned. "No one's losing jobs with Love's, which is great," he said. Owshin said many of their customers were local farmers or other workers who already pumped their own gas at night, and that most people seemed to view the new rule as a positive. Steve Scott of the Irrigon Shell gas station said he

of now, they will continue to have attendants fill tanks. Shane Dubry, an employee at the Heppner Circle K, said until 6 p.m. attendants are still helping people pump. He said they anticipate no changes to their procedures or staffing. Skyler Hall, an employee at the Lexington Sinclair gas station, said if people want to pump their own gas they can, but they still plan to have an attendant on duty in case people don't want to. He said so far, very few people have elected to pump their own gas. The new law is effective in all Eastern Oregon counties except for Umatilla, which has about 76,000 people.

hadn't heard anything from owners about whether they planned to allow customers to self-serve. He said as

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## STUDENT OF THE WEEK

Rudy Barerra

Senior - Riverside Jr/Sr High School

Rudy Barerra is a senior at Riverside Jr/Sr High School. Rudy is extremely involved in our school and the community. She is currently very active in student leadership and is the Senior Class President. Rudy has been a part of many different clubs and activities at Riverside Jr/Sr High School such as: Prom and Spirit Week Committee, Wrestling and Track and Field Manager, Youth Entrepreneurs Business Week, EOU Leadership Institute, Hugh O'Brien Youth Leadership Seminar as well as Girls Soccer, Basketball and Softball. Rudy is on track to graduate this year with her honors diploma as well as and AAOT from Blue Mountain Community College. After graduation Rudy plans to attend Oregon State University.

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