

EOTEC

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Road and Airport Road that surround EOTEC. While the city would immediately be on the hook for any unanticipated costs such as a major maintenance problem, the county would honor several commitments it has already made to the facility.

The county would continue paying \$75,000 toward operations for five more years. It would also pay an additional \$85,175 in 2018 and \$75,399 in 2019 based on an earlier prediction by management company VenuWorks of cost overruns in the first two years. The county would also pay its \$105,000 portion of the final overrun on EOTEC's construction budget.

VenuWorks has also created a list of equipment, storage and other things needed to run EOTEC year-round. Under Murdock's proposal, the county would still pay \$595,000 for its half of that outlay. Money for the county's obligations to EOTEC would come from \$500,000 per year that potato processor Lamb Weston has agreed to pay the county (with another \$500,000 to the city of Hermiston) each year for the next 15 years in lieu of property taxes.

The EOTEC agreement will add another year onto a previous agreement the county and city had to use their first four years of Lamb Weston payments for a water project designed to increase housing development in Hermiston.

The Umatilla County Fair would also agree to increase its lease payment from \$10,000 per year to \$100,000 per year.

The city would be expected to agree to build a storage facility, office space and conference room somewhere on EOTEC property for use by the fair. There are not currently enough offices in EOTEC's event center for all VenuWorks and fair staff, and the fair has been storing items in shipping containers on the property.

City Manager Byron Smith said he envisioned an EOTEC board that would act as an advisory committee to the city council, which would be the governing board.

Reaction

Drotzmann assured the audience at Monday's meeting that there would be opportunities for public input over the next six weeks. Responses from the seven community members who testified Monday were mostly positive.



The city of Hermiston will take over full ownership and liability of the EOTEC facilities in spring 2018.

PHOTOS BY E.J. HARRIS



Hermiston Mayor Dave Drotzmann lists the benefits of moving the Umatilla County Fair from its old location in Hermiston to the new site at EOTEC during a special joint meeting of the Hermiston City Council and the Umatilla County Commissioners on Monday in Hermiston.

"What you're trying to do here is going to un muddy a lot of waters we've had going on in the last year," Gay Newman said, citing confusion over who to approach about EOTEC issues.

George Anderson said he didn't think anyone should have their "knees knocking" with fear about EOTEC's future after what the people in the room had accomplished in building a \$17 million facility without going out for a bond. EOTEC board member Dan Dorran said he got emotional when people talked about a possibility of a "failure" of EOTEC after all the hard work and support that made the project possible, and also encouraged the city to keep in mind the reasons EOTEC

was built in the first place. He also threw out a suggestion that in the future private ownership of EOTEC might be an effective solution.

EOTEC neighbor Chris Wayne said he did not believe six weeks was enough time for the proposal to be vetted by the community. He also questioned, as a county taxpayer, whether the county was walking away from a huge investment before it had a chance to get a return on that investment.

Former interim EOTEC manager Nate Rivera encouraged the council to be sensitive going forward, as many people involved in the project disagree on what the definition of a successful EOTEC is — one that hosts the best fair and rodeo possible, one that is profitable,

or something else. He said they needed to decide on that definition, and to realize that their definition might not match that of donors and volunteers who had

contributed.

Discussion

Drotzmann said he was thankful the county was willing to make investments that it had already agreed to.

"The county acknowledges their responsibility, they own up to it," he said. "They don't just want to drop this on the city of Hermiston."

Murdock said he drafted the proposal the way he did because he recognized that the city wanted more control of EOTEC's destiny, but the county also wanted to see EOTEC succeed and felt there was a moral and ethical obligation to see certain things through.

"This agreement creates budget certainty for the county and a location for the fair and rodeo, but also relieves the county of many of the burdens of day to day operations," he said.

The votes taken by both governing bodies on Monday did not dissolve the intergovernmental agreement yet, but rather directed negotiations to begin dis-

The deal

- Hermiston takes on full ownership of and liability for EOTEC in spring 2018

- Hermiston takes over the portions of Ott Road and Airport Road surrounding EOTEC

- Hermiston will plan for storage facilities, office space and conference area for exclusive use by the Umatilla County Fair

- Umatilla County continues paying its annual contribution of \$75,000 through 2022

- Umatilla County pays \$105,000 of construction cost overruns

- Umatilla County pays \$595,000 toward proposed capital outlay for equipment, storage and other needed investments

- Umatilla County pays \$85,175 in 2018 and \$75,399 in 2019 to help cover initial losses predicted by VenuWorks

- Umatilla County Fair lease increases from \$10,000 to \$100,000 per year

solving the agreement by March 1. While Murdock's proposal seemed supported overall, there were sticking points. The city council only wants to take the portions of Ott Road and Airport Road bordering EOTEC, for example, while the commissioners expressed a hope the council would consider taking all of it. There is \$1.1 million set aside in the legislature's 2017 transportation package to improve Ott and Airport, but Smith said it would take more than that to improve them to the standard needed to handle traffic during fair week.

Commissioner and EOTEC board member Larry Givens said it was "pretty tough" for him to take the vote after so much involvement in EOTEC, but he thought overall it was "one of the best moves we can make."

BY THE WAY

BTW

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some good news for you: the sequel has arrived.

And if you were one of the 300 people who showed up to listen to author Michael Stone talk about his book, you can even take a little credit for it.

In a recent interview with the Charleston Post & Courier, Stone said it was his visit to Hermiston that inspired him to write "Border Child," which tells the next chapter in the lives of a family of Mexican immigrants.

Stone told the paper he was struck by how much of the audience in attendance that night was non-English speaking (so many that a translator was called in to help), and he was touched by how many people embraced his work because their children had read it.

At the Q&A afterward, an audience member asked if he planned to write a follow-up, and on the spur of the moment he said yes.

He began the first draft on his flight home from Oregon.

The rumor on the street (among others) is that Winco Foods is planning a Hermiston location, but spokesman Noah Fleisher said Winco

does not currently have any plans to build in Hermiston.

Hermiston residents have tried to rally social media campaigns to bring the grocery store to Hermiston in the past, but for now they will have to chalk the whispers of success up to nothing more than wishful thinking.

The public is invited to "Come Sail Away With Us" during the Hermiston Education Foundation's annual Beach & Beef Fundraiser. The dinner and live auction is Saturday, Feb. 3 at 5 p.m. at the Hermiston Community Center. Tickets, which are \$35 each, can be purchased at the Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce office, the school district office and at www.squareup.com/store/hef.

With a cruise ship theme, people are invited to enjoy a meal of crab and beef while supporting students in the school district. The nonprofit foundation awards grants to district staff for projects or equipment to enhance the educational experience of students.

For a full story about the education foundation and additional details about the upcoming fundraiser, see next week's Hermiston Herald.

The Inland Northwest

Musicians were among 79 small nonprofit organizations that recently received grants from the Oregon Arts Commission. The Small Operating Grants are designed to support arts organizations with budgets under \$150,000.

For the Hermiston-based classical music organization, the \$1,230 grant award literally puts gas in the tank, said Carrie Kikel of the arts commission. The orchestra and choral ensembles, which include members from across the region, travel throughout Eastern Oregon and southeastern Washington to perform free concerts.

Founded in 1999, INWM supports musicians in developing their talent. No auditions are required to join. For more information, contact 541-289-4696, inwm@machmedia.net or visit www.inlandnorthwestmusicians.com. For more about the Oregon Arts Commission grant programs, contact Brian Wagner at 503-428-1981, brian.wagner@oregon.gov or visit www.oregonartscommission.org.

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