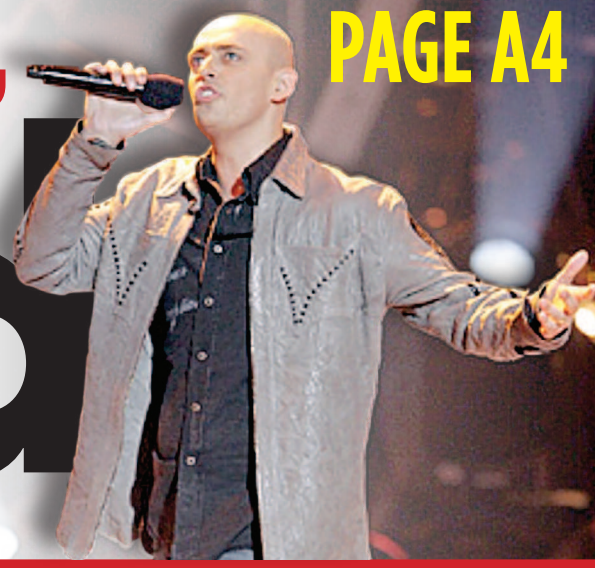


Hermiston Herald

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2018

HermistonHerald.com



INSIDE

RACE IS ON

Hermiston voters will see several contested races for city council on the ballot in May. **PAGE A3**

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BIRTHDAY TIME

Local schools celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday for Read Across America. **PAGE A13**

BY THE WAY

Cinco de Mayo moving to EOTEC

Hermiston's annual **Cinco de Mayo** celebration will be moving to the **Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center** this year.

The burgeoning event outgrew its original location at McKenzie Park, then outgrew its next home in downtown Hermiston after crowds reached roughly 5,000. Last year the event — stretching over two days and including everything from fireworks to carnival rides — was held at Butte Park.

The **Cinco de Mayo** celebration will take place the first weekend in May at EOTEC, 1705 East Airport Road. Keep an eye on future editions of the Herald for more information as the date gets closer.

...
The **Umatilla County Fire District 1** had quite the busy Wednesday last week, dealing with three fires within a span of 10 minutes.

Fire Chief **Scott Stanton** said the first two fires — a structure fire at East Beech Street and a field fire at Feedville Road — came in 90 seconds apart. Within 10 minutes, he said, **Umatilla Rural Fire Department** called UCFDI for assistance on a structure fire of their own.

“With **Echo Fire** assisting, we were able to handle all three fires although

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FULL RESPONSIBILITY Should Hermiston become sole owner of EOTEC?



FILE PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Visitors to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center come and go during an open house for the event center building in 2016.

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston city councilors will have a big decision to make Monday.

The council will be deciding whether the city should take on the full risks and rewards of owning the \$17 million Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center. Currently, the city and county share equal responsibility in the project.

The meeting takes place at 7 p.m. on March 12 at Hermiston City Hall, 180 NE Second St. and will include opportunity for public comment. An agenda packet with the official agreement is expected to be available online at www.hermiston.or.us/meetings by Friday afternoon.

City manager Byron Smith said the city and county have made good progress on the agreement since Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock first proposed the idea of the

How might this affect me?

If you're a taxpayer in the city, a best-case scenario is that EOTEC becomes a thriving, self-supporting asset for the city that regularly brings in visitors from out of town for events. A worst-case scenario would be that EOTEC has major unexpected maintenance issues and fails to make the expected amount of event revenue, causing a financial liability for the city that takes away from the city's ability to fund other services at current levels.

As for county taxpayers, the county will either miss out on revenue from EOTEC, dodge a financial burden or merely be one less “cook in the kitchen” for a project navigating normal ups and downs.

If you're affiliated with or a supporter of the Umatilla County Fair or Farm-City Pro Rodeo, there could be pros and cons to the change. Members of both boards have complained that it has been confusing to figure out if they should talk to the county, city or EOTEC board about an issue, and having the city in charge could streamline the process and help EOTEC be run more smoothly and efficiently.

On the other hand, there has been some debate about whether the top priority for EOTEC should be hosting a successful fair and rodeo, or if the top priority should be financial sustainability the other 51 weeks a year. At previous meetings, some city councilors have made comments supporting the vision that EOTEC needs to be a successful venue year-round. Increased lease costs could also have an affect on the fair's budget.

What is EOTEC?

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center is located on about 90 acres of ground on East Airport Road south of Hermiston. It includes an event center, barns, rodeo arena, partially completed RV park and grounds for hosting the Umatilla County Fair, Farm-City Pro Rodeo and other

events such as trade shows and livestock auctions. There is also room to grow — about 40 acres of the 90-acre footprint — that stakeholders hope will someday hold added features such as an amphitheater and event center expansion.

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Hermiston Chamber gets \$1 million for new building

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

As the Oregon Legislature wrapped up on Saturday, it passed on a capital construction bill that includes \$1 million for a new building for the Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce.

It was something that Josh Burns, chair of the chamber's board, said the chamber was “very excited” to hear.

“This will benefit our members in a more visible and more suitable space for the chamber that has adequate meeting space as well as the room and the facilities and the technology for workforce development training,” he said. “... Personally I'm really excited about this because it will help us create even more value for our members and our city.”

The chamber has been looking for new quarters for almost a year, after the city of Hermiston notified them that the parks and recreation department would be taking over operations of the Hermiston Conference Center (now being rebranded at the Hermiston Community Center) where the chamber had traditionally been located. In January, they moved into a smaller space in the Cornerstone Plaza on South Highway 395, but always considered it a temporary solution.

Now, Burns said, the chamber's board will work on design and finding a piece of property that will best fit the facility's purposes.

The capital construction bill allocated the money to the “Hermiston



HH FILE PHOTO

Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce executive director **Debbie Pedro** shows off the reception area of the chamber's temporary offices at the Cornerstone Plaza in this January file photo.

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