

Street project near Newport could lead to sidewalk program

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

Streets around Newport Park will be under construction this spring after the Hermiston City Council awarded Sinco Construction of Hermiston a bid for the project Monday.

The company will repave and rebuild full-width streets, complete with curbs and gutters, along portions of Southeast Fifth Street, Southeast Sixth Street and Newport Avenue. Neighboring property owners will also be given a chance to access grants for adding sidewalks in front of their homes, which assistant city manager Mark Morgan said will be used as a pilot to start a city-wide sidewalk incentive program.

Sinco Construction was the low bidder out of seven

bids at \$283,885.

Morgan told the council there should be access to the park via Hurlburt Avenue through the duration of the project, which is expected to start soon and wrap up mid-summer. The result will be wider, better-quality paving on the streets plus curbs and gutters to help direct water during rainstorms.

The project was reviewed in depth by the city's public infrastructure committee, which discussed whether the city should pay for sidewalks to be added at the same time.

Sidewalks around Newport Park would be in the public interest, considering the number of children who walk on the side of the road to access the park. However, the committee felt it would set a bad precedent for the city to cover the whole



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

A car turns at the intersection of Southeast Sixth Street and East Newport Avenue on Tuesday in Hermiston.

\$60,000 cost when developers building new projects are now required to pay the full cost for putting in side-

walks. The compromise was that Sinco will do prep work such as moving water meter boxes, but if property own-

ers want sidewalks they will still be responsible for materials and labor for the sidewalks themselves.

Some of the properties will be able to access matching funds, however, as the city tests out a pilot program for sidewalk infill that will lead to a city-wide program.

Morgan said the final details of the incentive program were still being worked out, but it would be applicable only to existing developments that had been grandfathered in. The program would provide a checklist — Is the property on a school route? Does it connect to an existing sidewalk? — and the more items an applicant can check off the higher percentage of matching funds the city would provide. He said the rough draft of criteria would provide one Newport Park neighbor with a 75 percent match, several with 30 to 60 percent matches and two undeveloped lots with no matching funds.

Westland Road gets a temporary speed reduction

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
STAFF WRITER

Lamb Weston's \$250 million expansion along Westland Road, Hermiston, is bringing temporary speed reductions through the construction zone.

The project will take more than a year to complete and employ as many as 500 construction workers. Tom Fellows, director of Umatilla County Public Works Department, told the county board of commissioners last Wednesday that Lamb Weston is seeking temporary speed reductions for the safety of workers and the driving public.

PBS Engineering and Environmental of Vancouver, Washington, conducted a traffic study on the area and came up with three safety suggestions, which Fellows presented to the county board:

- a temporary traffic signal at the intersection of Westland and Cottonwood Bend roads for the duration of the construction project, which ends no later than March 31, 2019;
- reducing the speed in the construction zone from 55 mph to 45 mph until April 1, 2019;
- widening to add a second turn lane on Cottonwood Bend Road at Westwood Road.

The traffic study estimated 520 vehicles on Cottonwood Bend at peak times during construction and 940 vehicles per hour. Those numbers meet the criteria for a traffic light according to "The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices," the Federal Highway Administration's publication that sets standards for traffic lights and more. The county uses the manual in making road safety decisions.

Fellows said the contractors would like the light in place as soon as possible, and the temporary reduction in speed requires board approval.

The board approved the slower speed. Commissioner Larry Givens said he has been on Westland and had drivers "blow by me." Commissioner Larry Elfering said a number of constituents would like to see Westland Road permanently cut back to 45 mph.

Fellows said the county can ask the Oregon Department of Transportation to study the matter. He said the county board may have the authority to make a permanent speed zone, but that could open the county to certain liabilities. County counsel Doug Olsen told commissioners that going through the state removes that liability.

BRIEFS

Candidate forum slated for April 11

Hermiston voters interested in meeting city and county candidates in person will get the chance at a candidate forum hosted by the Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce and KOHU.

The forum is April 11 at Armand Larive Middle School, 1497 S.W. Ninth St., in Hermiston. The evening will start with refreshments and a chance to mingle with candidates at 5:30 p.m. followed by a forum with county commissioner candidates at 6 p.m.

After a short break the audience will then be able to hear from city council candidates.

Running for Hermiston City Council are Mark Gomolski, Jackie Linton and incumbent Lori Davis for Ward 1, Shean Fitzgerald and Roy Barron for Ward 2, Kyrin Miller and incumbent Jackie Myers for Ward 3 and Michael Engelbrecht and incumbent Doug Smith for Ward 4.

Running for the board of county commissioners are Tom Bailor, Rick Pullen and incumbent George Murdock for Position 1, and John Shafer and incumbent Larry Givens for Position 2.

For more information call the chamber at 541-567-6151.

Stanfield taking applications for council vacancy

The Stanfield City Council has a vacancy.

The city will take applications until April 13 for appointment to the city council seat formerly held by Pam McSpadden, who died Feb. 28.

To apply, send a letter of interest to Stanfield City Hall by April 13. Candidates are also asked to attend the April 17 city council meeting, where the council plans to appoint someone to fill the remainder of McSpadden's term. Applicants must have resided in Stanfield for at least two years and be a registered voter.

McSpadden was a city councilor for over a decade and volunteered at the Stanfield Senior Center and the Food Basket, Stanfield's food bank for those in need.

Hermiston to hire elementary deans of students

Hermiston School District will hire deans of students for all five of its elementary schools for the 2018-2019 school year.

Interim superintendent Tricia Mooney said the positions were created as a result of increasing enrollment at

the elementary schools, and a need for additional support. She said elementary school principals were currently working through the selection process. Mooney said duties for the new hires would vary slightly throughout the schools, but would include overseeing student attendance, the talented and gifted program, and academic support processes.

Mooney said the position is not the same as a vice principal.

"These are not administrative positions, rather they are TOSAs (Teachers on Special Assignment)," Mooney said in an email. She said the positions are part of the Hermiston Association of Teachers work group.

Livestock district goes to vote

More than 160 residents near Hermiston will get to vote on forming a new livestock district.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners last Wednesday approved putting the matter to a vote of the public, according to county records.

Several residents in the area petitioned the county to create the district to keep open range cattle from coming onto their property. Commissioners George

Murdock and Larry Givens said they visited the 2,000-acre site for the district north of Hermiston on the Columbia River, which also includes portions of Hat Rock State Park.

Commissioner Bill Elfering said he was familiar with the area, and he was inclined to let the people decide the matter. He moved to put it on a ballot, and Givens gave the second. All three voted in favor.

County counsel Doug Olsen said the elections division reported any Tuesday in April is available for the special election, with April 17 offering probably adequate time.

He also said the elections department will mail ballots to the 166 active voters in the district.



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