

# Police Facebook post highlights social media challenges

By PHIL WRIGHT  
STAFF WRITER

The Stanfield Police Department received plenty of praise for its Facebook post accusing two suspects of breaking into cars and stealing cash and cell-phones. But the posting also drew accusations of taking an unprofessional and harsh tone.

The small town police department dropped the following post on its Facebook page Tuesday afternoon. The *Hermiston Herald* has not edited or altered the post:

“THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW reached out and grabbed him! Travis Landon (age 25) and his Hooligan accomplice decided to do some illegal shopping this weekend. (Also known as a vehicle prowler)

After getting into several cars, and taking cash and cell phones, this dynamic duo headed out of town. Little did they know the long arm of the “Stanfield Police Department” does reach into Hermiston! Travis was captured AND ARRESTED while parked in Hermiston sitting in his car by our very own Officer Marcum.

And if you’re reading this, Travis’s little buddy, feel free to take advantage of the Turn Yourself In Tuesday special our department is having today. Free ride to Pendleton with room and board included for your visit! No need to call for reservations! Just stop in.”

The police department’s post prompted more than 200 shares to other Facebook pages and more than 400 comments.

Landon, during a phone interview Thursday, said the Facebook post caught him off guard.

Yes, Landon said, officer Cody Marcum arrested him, but the officer was professional throughout, processed him at the Stanfield Police Department and released him. Landon said Marcum even gave him a ride back into Hermiston. Then came the police department’s post, along with a jail house mugshot from four years ago.

“I just don’t think it’s right,” Landon said. “I feel like it’s OK for police to use social media to search for information, but to publicly shame someone — I feel it just isn’t right.”

Landon said he did not

*“I just don’t think it’s right. I feel like it’s OK for police to use social media to search for information, but to publicly shame someone — I feel it just isn’t right.”*

Travis Landon,

subject of Stanfield Police Department’s controversial Facebook post

want to talk much about the criminal accusations. He said he gave a ride to someone and did not know the person stashed stolen goods in his car.

“I basically had nothing to do with it,” he said.

In spite of friends telling him to not read the Facebook comments, Landon said he does and feels compelled to defend himself — which he did on the Stanfield Police post. But he said he has no answer for how to deal with the social media storm, and it now it is affecting and embarrassing his family.

Stanfield is such a small town, he said, and living there as a gay man was hard enough. The Facebook post has only made life more difficult, so he said he recently took off for a fresh start in Portland. Besides, Landon said, he long wanted to live in a bigger city.

State court records show he has yet to face any charges stemming from this arrest, but the Wasco County District Attorney’s Office filed a misdemeanor charge Thursday accusing Landon of possessing heroin on Tuesday. He has to appear in court there Monday for the arraignment. Landon said the charge is bunk and based on a police finding foil he had previously used for smoking drugs.

“I’m on day six of being clean,” he said.

Around 60 percent of the comments expressed support for the Stanfield Police Department, Marcum’s arrest of Landon or the post itself. Bruce Lewis’ post reflected the majority view: “Landed Landon, fantastic. Now grab that Hooligan. None of us enjoy evil doers shopping in our vehicles. Well done SPD. Woo Hool!”

Tiffany Lynn summed up a lot of the concerns of the minority: “While funny...I believe public humiliation, like the Puritans

used, falls under cruel and unusual punishment. And I agree with the previous comment that it is unprofessional. Also whatever happens to innocent until proven guilty? Bigger mistakes have been made. And I seriously doubt everyone commenting is perfect, let alone has a perfect record.”

Stanfield police officer Joyce Wright published the post. She said the commenters supporting the department tend to be from Stanfield and Echo, where Stanfield police provide services, while the negative posts are coming from outsiders, even from other states.

Creating Facebook posts are collaborative efforts in the department, she said. Typically an officer drafts a post then two more staff check it for obvious errors and to make sure it makes sense. Wright said Facebook allows the department to show its good work, ranging from visiting local classrooms to arresting suspected criminals. She said the department only posts arrests of adults and only posts public information. And sometimes officers try to add some humor, she said, but “we don’t do it with the intent of publicly shaming anyone.”

Social media also can help solve crimes. She said people view posts and provide tips to police, which is happening in this case. Stanfield police, however, have yet to arrest the person Landon was with.

Wright also said the department’s social media guidelines follow those of the Hermiston Police Department, which has used ironic humor in its Facebook posts.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said social media can be a good tool or a slippery slope when police get too cute.

“I’ll openly admit I

pushed the envelope over the years in news releases,” he said, recounting in 2012 when he described a suspect as a “scourge to society.” That phrase landed the story in the *Daily Mail* newspaper.

So in January, when he had the department roll out its more aggressive use of Facebook, he said he built in some firewalls. Edmiston is not an administrator of the page. He said he is not yet comfortable enough with social media, so those duties fall to the lieutenant and two captains. They also ask Edmiston to weigh in before posting statements that could cause a stir.

Before wading deeper into the social media stream, Edmiston said he checked to see what other departments did, particularly police in Kennewick and Pasco. Hermiston also looked at case law for what it can and can not do on social media. Banning comments or commenters, for example, is generally a no-go for a public body’s social media presence.

Hermiston often posts about arrests made and cases it’s working, but Edmiston said the department does not seek to ridicule or humiliate anyone. The department includes mug shots of suspects. Edmiston said that helps cut down public records requests for the photos. News agencies instead can just take the image from the post. And the language in those posts matters.

“We have to be aware that in court, it comes down to guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, and people are innocent until proven guilty,” he said. “It’s important to say yes, even though we arrested this person, they are alleged to have committed the crime.”

Stanfield City Manager Blair Larsen said he was “amazed at the response” the police post drew. And negative comments aside,

he said “it’s really hard for me at least to find anything wrong with it.”

Larsen conceded it could be seen as public shaming, but the information is public and nothing in the post states Landon or the other person is guilty of any crime.

“We’re not saying they’re criminals,” he said. “We’re just saying this is the fact of what happened.”

Larsen also defended the tone of the post. Police work is hard, often unrewarding and requires dealing with some of the worst parts of society, he said. Officers should take moments to lighten up. Larsen added he does not see anything wrong with encouraging a suspect to turn themselves in.

Local defense attorney Kara Davis said police should be cautious about what they post on social media. Their statements can run the risk of contaminating potential jurors. But often by the time even a well-publicized case gets to trial, jurors don’t remember Facebook comments.

Rather than the jury, Davis said the bigger issue is whether social media pressures someone with a good defense into taking a plea deal. Some defendants might see negative comments on Facebook, consider their case a lost cause and take an offer when they should not.

Larsen said government can interact with the public in so many ways, but no one reads a budget document by choice.

The police department’s social media post is a way for government to connect with citizens. Larsen also said he would talk with anyone who felt “truly offended” or wanted to hold conversations on improving the department’s use of social media.

Wright said Stanfield police have been on Facebook since November, and with anything new, there’s plenty to learn. That includes the realization that Facebook means local situations can become global in no time.

## WORSHIP COMMUNITY



**First United Methodist Church**  
**Hermiston**  
191 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston OR  
**Sunday Worship 11am • 541-567-3002**  
Nursery available • Check us out on Face Book  
Worship Livestream at herfumc.com  
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors  
**Rev. Dr. Jim Pierce, pastor**

**First Christian Church**

*“Proclaiming the Message of Hope, Living the Gospel of Love”*

**Worship Gathering 10:00 am**  
**Children’s Church 10:00 am**  
**567-3013**  
775 W. Highland Ave., Hermiston

**The Full Gospel Home Church**

235 SW 3rd  
Phone 567-7678  
Rev. Ed Baker - Rev. Nina Baker

**Sunday:**  
Sunday School.....10:00 am  
Worship.....11:00 am  
Evening Service.....7:00 pm  
Wednesday Service..7:00 pm  
*“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”*  
1 Pet. 5:7

**NEW BEGINNINGS**

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP  
Worship Service 10:30 AM  
Sunday School 9:00 AM  
Pastor J.C. Barnett  
Children’s Church & Nursery Available  
700 West Orchard Avenue  
P.O. Box 933  
Hermiston, Oregon  
**541-567-8441**

**HermNaz**  
*the best thing about Sundays*

1520 W ORCHARD AVE  
Sunday Worship Service  
10:30 am Classes for Kids @ 9:15 am  
**SEEKING JESUS, SHARING LIFE, SERVING PEOPLE**  
www.hermistonnazarene.org

**Seventh-day Adventist Church**

**Saturdays**  
**Sabbath School.....9:30 a.m.**  
**Worship Service.....11:00 a.m.**  
**English & Spanish Services**

**567-8241**  
**855 W. Highland • Hermiston**

**LANDMARK BAPTIST CHURCH**

125 E. Beech Ave. • 567-3232  
Pastor David Dever

Sun. Bible Classes.....10:00am  
Sun. Worship Service.....11:00am  
Sun. Evening Worship.....6:00pm  
Wed. Prayer & Bible Study.....6:00pm  
**www.hermistonlmbc.com**

**Grace Baptist Church**

555 SW 11th, Hermiston  
**567-9497**

Nursery provided for all services  
Sunday School - 9:30 AM  
Worship - 10:45 AM  
6:00 PM  
Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM  
*“Proclaiming God’s word, growing in God’s grace”*

**St. Johns Episcopal Church**

Join Us  
On Our Journey  
With Jesus.  
**Scripture, Tradition and Reason**  
Family service 9am Sunday  
N.E. Gladys Ave & 7th, Hermiston  
PH: 567-6672  
**We are an all inclusive Church who welcomes all.**

*Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church*

565 W. HERMISTON AVE.  
DAILY MASS: Monday-Friday  
.....English 7:00 am  
Thursday.....Spanish 6:00 pm  
SATURDAY.....English 5:00 pm  
.....Spanish 7:00 pm  
SUNDAY.....English 9:00 am  
.....Bilingual 11:00 am  
.....Spanish 1:00 pm  
Office.....567-5812



## Re-zone clears way for housing on Diagonal Road

By JADE MCDOWELL  
STAFF WRITER

The stretch of Diagonal Road leading toward Sandstone Middle School in Hermiston could someday include apartments or a restaurant after the city council approved a re-zone.

The 52-acre triangle between Northeast Eighth and 10th streets was previously zoned for light industrial use, but will now be a mixture of commercial and multi-family residential zones. It is mostly undeveloped besides the restoration business O So Kleen, a shop and a couple of former onion sheds.

Clint Spencer, the city planner, said the industrial zoning made more sense when it was put in place in the 1950s because Diagonal Road was a major truck route and the surrounding properties did not yet have housing on them. Now, however, he said it seemed like uses such as an auto-wrecking yard were not compatible with the neighborhood.

“Our opinion as staff is it probably isn’t the high-

est and best use of the property,” he said.

Spencer said the planning commission unanimously recommended the change as part of the city’s efforts to encourage more development of affordable housing in Hermiston. He said the city has a more than 40-year supply of industrial land, according to a recent analysis, but shortage of viable places to develop housing.

“What we have is too much employment land and not enough residential land,” he said.

The new zoning, which the city council unanimously approved, would allow for offices, retail, restaurants or gas stations along Diagonal Road and various types of housing behind them. Spencer said if housing were developed Jennie Road would likely be pushed through from its current stopping point to Northeast 10th Street and extra roads added.

During its May 29 meeting the city council also made some adjustments to the city’s garage sale ordinance, which previously did

not allow any signs advertising garage sales in the public right of way, including on sidewalks, utility poles and street signs. Under the new rules, people can place signs on vehicles that are legally parked and not obstructing views of traffic. However, the city tightened the timeline for enforcement, allowing the code enforcement officer to take action on illegally placed signs after four hours instead of 96.

City Manager Byron Smith said people often place signs illegally on cardboard boxes or utility poles on street corners, then leave the signs to blow away or clutter the street corner. By working hard to educate the public that they are now allowed to place signs on their vehicles, he said the hope is that they will go that route and then remove the sign after the weekend is over.

For people who persist in placing signs where they are not supposed to be, the code enforcement officer will now be able to give people four hours to remove the signs instead of waiting four

days.

“We’re hoping to do a lot of education,” Smith said.

Police Chief Jason Edmiston said the city is looking into creating some sort of kiosk in one of the parks where people could post garage sale signs and shoppers could have a one-stop shop to look at. It would be wiped clean every Monday. He said the city could also promote a Facebook page as an alternative to posting signs around town.

City councilors said they didn’t want to discourage people from selling unwanted items and being able to make a little extra money, but it was also important to keep the city looking nice. Doug Primmer said he would like to see the city sponsor a location for a city-wide yard sale where people could come together to sell items in one spot.

Smith said Al Davis, the new general manager for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, has been working on creating something along those lines in the form of a flea market at EOTEC.

**Ultimate Hawaii**  
Tour with Pearl Harbor Experience  
Departs weekly year-round

13 days from **\$1,799\***

**VMT vacations**

Save up to **\$900** per couple

Promo code **N7017**  
**1-866-881-0353**

\*Prices are per person based on double occupancy plus \$299 taxes & fees. Single supplement and seasonal surcharges may apply. Add-on airfare available. Offers apply to new bookings only, made by 7/31/18. Other terms and conditions may apply. Ask your Travel Consultant for details.

**NEED SHADE? We've Got YOU Covered!**

**Sun/Solar Patio Shades Pergolas • Patio Covers Awnings • Sunrooms Screens & More!**

Proudly Serving Eastern Oregon With Quality Outdoor Living Products Since 2009!

**541-720-0772**  
FREE ESTIMATES!!

**Backyard By Design, LLC**  
www.mybackyardbydesignor.com

FOUR SEASONS BUILDING PRODUCTS    SUN CONTROL    Sunesta    BUILD THE BEST FOUR SEASONS SUNROOMS

To share your  
worship times call  
**541-278-2678**