

Lamp blamed for fire at local Adventist church

Initial damage estimated at \$3 million

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

A fire early Sunday morning destroyed much of the Hermiston Adventist Church, as flames and extensive smoke damaged the decades-old house of worship.

Umatilla County Fire District Marshal Scott Goff said investigators think the fire was caused by a lamp that was too close to a wooden table. Foul play is not suspected.

"It was a long, slow, smoldering fire that kind of cooked the whole building," Goff said.

As flames engulfed the west side of the building before dawn on Sunday, some church members were quick to jump to action.

Larry Hanson, a former head elder in the church, helped fight the fire as a volunteer for the Echo Fire Department.

"It's kind of hard to say how long it had been burning," Hanson said.

He arrived around 5:15 a.m., close to an hour after UCFD reached the church, and remained on site until about 9 a.m.

Hanson, a longtime member of the church, said the building was constructed in the mid-1960s.



Flames erupted out of these doors on the west end of the Seventh-day Adventist church on Sunday in Hermiston.

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hanson said on Monday that they wouldn't know the extent of the damage until an insurance adjuster arrived Tuesday.

Goff said he estimated the damage at \$3 million. Hanson said the church's insurance would cover those costs.

While the building is under repair, he said the congregation will hold church services at the Hermiston Junior Academy, the school run by the Seventh-day Adventist church, on Northwest 11th Street.

Carl Robins, a member of the Hermiston Seventh-day Adventist church for the past

seven years, was standing in the parking lot and surveying the damage Monday morning.

"I'm sad," he said. "I'd be lying if I said I wasn't."

Robins said he had looked at the damage inside the building on Sunday, and said it appeared that much of the building's interior had been burned.

"The guy who does the sound equipment went into the sanctuary, and he said pretty much everything in there is toast," he said.

Robins said he was relieved no one was injured, which was the most important thing. As he was stand-

ing there, a man drove up and handed him a bag.

"I brought cookies for your congregation," he said. "I know that's not much."

Hanson said the church currently has about 175 active members, and they had varying responses to the fire.

"It's interesting," Hanson said.

"People react in different ways. There certainly were a few people crying — I think especially those who grew up with this being the only church they've ever known."

He said for others, the fire was disappointing, but

Other emergencies strike during the weekend

HERMISTON HERALD

The Umatilla County Fire District stayed busy this weekend with several major structure fires.

In addition to a blaze that damaged the Seventh-day Adventist church in Hermiston, crews on Sunday morning also responded to a fire on Northeast 10th Street and on early Monday morning to an RV and shed fire on Echols Road.

Around 6:30 a.m. Sunday, crews responded to a fire in the 2100 block of Northeast 10th, where a single-wide manufactured home was fully engulfed.

Fire Marshal Scott Goff said the cause of the fire was determined to be a faulty water heater. He said the couple who live on the property were not home at the time and no one was hurt. The damage from the fire is estimated at \$75,000.

Shortly after midnight on Monday, crews responded to a fire on Echols Road.

This blaze burned a 25-foot motor home and a fifth-wheel trailer, as well as a small barn and some other items, including an area full of scrap metal, wood and car parts. There was also a 100-gallon propane tank that was actively venting and on fire.

The fire spread to about half an acre. Crews had put the fire out and were back to the station within about three hours.

Goff said the property owners were in the house, and there is a person who was living in the motor home, but they were not inside at the time.

Goff said the cause of that fire has not yet been determined, but no foul play is suspected.

The crews who responded to the fires this weekend also covered several medical calls and an assault call in Umatilla, receiving help from off-duty firefighters and other departments.

they were comforted by the knowledge that their church family still exists, just in a different location.

The church, at 855 W. Highland Ave., is best known in the community for its annual Journey to Beth-

lehem living nativity. Robins said most of the scenery is stored in a separate storage shed.

UCFD was assisted by Boardman, Echo and Umatilla rural fire departments in fighting the fire.

Council unpacks property rule issues

By JADE MCDOWELL
STAFF WRITER

The Hermiston city council changed its mind mid-meeting on one property issue Monday and decided to ask the public about another before moving forward.

The council first rejected a proposed update to accessory dwelling regulations, then after further discussion gave the planning commission the go-ahead to start the public hearing process. After hearing mixed reviews on an idea to ban use of metal shipping containers for storage in residential zones, they asked city staff to survey the public about it.

Councilor John Kirwan had commented at a previous meeting that he was seeing an increase of metal shipping containers being used as storage sheds next to houses. He inquired about regulations for such use, and after finding out there were none, councilors asked city staff to consider drafting some rules.

On Monday during a work session, city planner Clint Spencer presented a "first draft" recommendation from the planning commission for feedback. The rules would ban use of the containers in residential zones, leaving an exemption for temporary uses up to 60 days in a year or up to 120 days when connected to a construction project that has been issued a building permit. In commercial and industrial zones one container per lot (in a commercial zone) or per acre (for industrial) could be used, provided it was painted the same color as the primary building, rust-free, logo-free, on a concrete or asphalt slab and has been granted a building permit.

In all zones, the regulations would apply to new containers, not existing ones.

Councilors had mixed feelings about the proposal. Doug Smith said he didn't want to see a lot of the shipping containers popping up in residential neighborhoods, but later during the council's regular meeting said he thought the city should get feedback on what seemed like it could be a polarizing issue.

Mayor David Drotzmann said some shipping containers next to houses were unsightly, but he wouldn't necessarily have a problem with one in someone's back yard, painted a subtle color and mostly out of sight. He said he "understood the visibility issue" but wasn't sure he wanted to see the city take away an affordable storage option for people.

"I'm struggling with it a little bit," he said. "I don't like the way they look, but I don't like the way some of my neighbors' houses look either."

Comments from the public were mixed too. Jackie Linton said she thought shipping containers would look out of place in her Beebe Avenue neighborhood, but she didn't have a problem with them in more rural neighborhoods with larger lots. Rhonda Sallee and Randy Smith questioned why the city needed such an ordinance at all.

Councilors asked staff to survey Hermiston residents and bring the feedback to a future council meeting.

The council also discussed another set of recommendations from the planning commission Monday, for accessory dwelling units. Spencer said those could include guest houses, basement apartments, apartments over garages

and other "mother-in-law" apartments.

Spencer said the state legislature passed new laws for ADUs that take effect July 1, including a requirement that new ADUs have permits.

Spencer said Hermiston has always allowed accessory dwelling units only if no rent was charged for them, but the new law forces the city to let people charge rent for guest houses, basement apartments and other ADUs on their property. He said it was "frustrating" that the state had arbitrarily changed the character of Hermiston's zoning code by turning all of its single-family residential zones into multi-family residential areas.

To address the changes, the planning commission spent three months crafting amendments to the city's code. The new requirements state that accessory dwelling units must meet all building codes, include a bathroom and kitchen, be accessible from a separate entrance than the main dwelling and come with one to two additional paved offstreet parking spaces depending on the number of bedrooms. The dwellings will be subject to a permit and permit fee, and will be charged the utility rate for multi-family dwellings.

City councilor Jackie Myers wanted to see additional rules about the ADU having to match the primary dwelling and setting aesthetic standards, and other councilors agreed, but Spencer said the advice of legal counsel was that wouldn't

hold up as a "reasonable" standard under the law because the city doesn't have rules for what colors people can paint their primary residence, for example.

When it came time for a vote, only councilors Doug Primmer and Lori Davis voted in favor of having the city start the public hearing and notice process to turn the regulations into law. But afterward Drotzmann expressed the feeling that the regulations were likely as extensive as the planning commission was able to make them, and Spencer confirmed that there wasn't much more the commission could add after legal counsel had directed them to take out multiple design standards that had originally been included. He also said that the state law takes effect July 1 no matter what the city passes to "put siderails" on the issue, and that it could always be revised later.

That persuaded Myers, Gutierrez, Smith and Hardin, who voted with Primmer and Davis this time after Myers made another motion to once again consider moving forward with the public process to adopt the new standards.

Shooting victim taken off life support, homicide investigation underway

HERMISTON HERALD

The investigation into the shooting of Erik Navarrete Campos, 26, has turned into a homicide investigation, according to Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston, after the young man was removed from life support Friday.

An autopsy determined the cause of death was a gunshot wound to the head.

Police responded to Navarrete Campos's residence in the 500 block of Hartley Avenue in Hermiston about 1:20 a.m. on June 4 after a report of gunshots and found Navarrete Campos injured. He was taken to Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, Wash.

Police have not released information about suspects or the circumstances surrounding the incident. Anyone with information is encouraged to call 541-



Erik Navarrete Campos

567-5519 to speak with a detective.

Navarrete Campos's family and friends held two car washes over the weekend to help raise money for his medical expenses and have set up a GoFundMe page online. He was a lifelong Hermiston resident.

The victim's legal name is Campos Navarrete, but family and friends knew him as Navarrete Campos.



The most valuable and respected source of local news, advertising and information for our communities.

www.eomediagroup.com

EARTHLINK INTERNET

HIGH SPEED INTERNET

Enjoy big-time internet speeds without spending big bucks!

Get Connected for as low as **\$14.95/mo.**

HyperLink™ High-Speed Internet

Contract period 12 to 36 months. *Not available in all areas. **Speeds may vary depending on network conditions. †Speed comparison based on 10 Mbps download.

Get Connected for as low as **\$49.99/mo.**


Satellite Internet

Not available in all areas. **Speeds may vary depending on network conditions. †Speed comparison based on 10 Mbps download.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL AUTHORIZED RETAILER

855-977-9436

Authorized Dealer





5 Theater Cineplex

Check wildhorseresort.com for showtimes

\$5 Matinee Classics Every Wednesday

Credit & Debit Cards accepted




Cineplex gift cards available

541-966-1850

Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216

MARY

is turning 90

1 Loving Husband
4 Amazing Children
8 Beautiful Grandchildren
12 Sweet Great Grandchildren
1 Blessed Life

Happy Birthday!

Mary Lois Newman
June 19, 1928
We Love You,
Your Loving Family