

FARMERS

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“Here, everything works,” he said. “In Brazil, you have to work a lot to do a little.”

He said he was interested in seeing how the pump stations used here are different than in Brazil, and he wanted to study the system further to see if it could be adapted well in the region where he grows crops.

Before the group set out for a second day of tours on Wednesday, Ziari hosted an informal question-and-answer session with one of the bilingual group members translating.

One grower asked how much of the world was using the advanced precision irri-

gation technology that they had seen at Herb Stahl’s farm during their tour. Ziari said worldwide, irrigation is at about 30 percent efficiency, but Stahl’s farm achieves about 90 percent efficiency.

“I think that it is a global model for efficiency, but we have large areas, many hectares in the United States that are not that efficient, that need to be brought up. But we are progressing fast,” he said.

Other questions were about the growth of agriculture in the United States, and whether the Eastern Oregon region could support more crops. Ziari said growth is limited in the United States not so much by land availability but by political issues. In 1900, 50 percent of Amer-

icans were involved in farming, he said, and now it’s less than three percent due to the technological advances that have made farming more efficient, and large corporations who are now operating many of them.

“Because we are now 2 percent of the population, politicians are ignoring the needs of agriculture,” he said.

He told the group that investment in new projects was needed for Brazil’s agricultural economy to grow, and the investment community was interested.

Olivira said Brazil was ready. And if the government stabilized, the country’s agriculture could reach the level of technology used in the United States “very fast.”



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY FRED ZIARI

Herb Stahl from the Stanfield Hutterian Brethren farm shows the FieldNet Wireless pivot control to a group of farmers visiting from Brazil.

PROJECT

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provide a safer route to school for students who walk along First Place to get to Hermiston High School and Rocky Heights Elementary School.

The city won’t get the funds for the project until 2022. Revenue for the transportation package will come in over time, so the state had to spread the earmarks. Morgan said it would be prudent to lay some groundwork now, however, on the off chance Hermiston has a chance to move up the list. The agreement with ODOT puts some “meat on the bones” for what was a single line in the legislative package.

He said he knew some people in town would probably have opinions about where they thought the money should be spent instead, but the city pitched \$39 million in projects to the legislature’s transportation committee and this is the one the legislature chose to fund.

Drotzmann said he was a little disappointed that the earmark in the legislation

specifically said North First Place, when the example he had given the transportation committee was the need to redesign the intersection of South First Place and Orchard Avenue, where cars get backed up and block fire trucks and ambulances from getting through. Since the line in the legislation specifies North, the city can’t use any of the money for projects south of Hermiston Avenue, including the Orchard intersection. However, he said the city was still very grateful for the money and it would be helpful in clearing up Highway 395 congestion when complete.

“Any time the state wants to give us \$4.5 million, it’s a good project,” he said.

Hermiston Energy Services

Before its regular meeting Monday, the council participated in a work session with Nate Rivera, general manager of Hermiston Energy Services.

Rivera said HES, the city-owned utility that serves 63 percent of Hermiston, recently completed a full inventory of its infrastructure. They found a few issues — including six miles of outdated con-

centric neutral distribution cables underground that need replaced with newer technology — and 134 utility poles that need replaced soon.

“Any time the state wants to give us \$4.5 million, it’s a good project.”

David Drotzmann, Hermiston Mayor

Eighty-nine of the poles are roadside, but 45 are in back yards, where they are more expensive and time-consuming to replace. That brings up a third issue, which Rivera said was backyard overhead distribution of power that often brings lines through yards with trees and has a “high propensity for outages.”

To address all of those problems, Rivera said he was looking at a two-year construction plan that would include replacing some lines around town, replacing poles

and doing a 67-lot pilot project near Hermiston High School to bring some distribution lines underground.

The work plan Rivera presented would include \$536,750 for pole replacement, \$615,000 to replace underground cable, \$325,000 to “re-conductor” some lines and \$335,000 for the pilot project, in addition to the utility’s regular yearly maintenance schedule, for a total of \$3,321,750 during 2018-2020. He said the city had budgeted about \$812,000 for HES for the upcoming fiscal year and he assumed it would be a similar rate for 2019-2020. That, combined with \$1.5 million that HES was able to save during recent construction projects such as replacing meters, would leave HES about \$200,000 short.

The city would likely need to have a conversation about raising rates to cover that, Rivera said. But in return, customers would get increased reliability, which HES has “struggled a little bit with” this year.

Rivera said he had wanted to get feedback from the council before coming back with a completed, official proposal for a vote later.

First large grassfire sparks

HERMISTON HERALD

A fire in Stanfield burned for several hours Monday afternoon on some property near the Hinkle Railyard.

Umatilla County Fire District 1 Battalion Chief J.W. Roberts said the cause of the fire was unknown, but it started shortly after 1:30 p.m. on Hoosier Lane, near a composting area where people can drop off yard debris. He said other

than a few fence posts, no structures were affected. Roberts said the wind was making the fire hard to extinguish, but there was no threat to any buildings nearby.

On Tuesday afternoon a brush fire also swept through the Joy Lane and Alpine Drive area behind Wal-Mart. Structures were threatened but the fire district managed to keep the nearby buildings safe.

Fire season has begun, and the fire department reminded people that outdoor burning is closed until October 1. Residents can have confined cooking fires and small fires in burn pits, but yard debris burning is off limits. Residents of Hermiston can go to city hall and get a yard trash permit, which allows them to dump debris at no cost so they do not have to burn it themselves.

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Our gratitude also goes to all the Girl Scout members and friends who helped plan, set up and run the event. And much appreciation to the fathers/ father figures and their princesses for sharing an evening with us!

